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ABSTRACT

Appreciation of African games has increased in this country; especially board games which have been popularized through commercial versions. African games are invaluable resources for studying subjects requiring mathematical concepts, as well as social studies, history, geography, and languages. This manual presents some of the better known African games. It is arranged in four parts. Part 1, "Background to African Games," describes the three different categories of strategy games: games of alignment like Tic-Tac-Toe; struggle for territory games, covering African versions of checkers; and mankala, one of the oldest types of board game. Part 2, "Some African Games and How to Play Them," provides samples of African games. Brief comments about the games, the players, illustrations of playing equipment and detailed instructions, along with diagrams demonstrating moves and strategies are provided for each game. Part 3, "Supplementary Materials," provides ideas for making different types of board games. Also included are brief notes on the people and customs associated with the games, as well as a map of African countries. Part 4, "Bibliography," contains a partially annotated bibliography which includes references used and resource material. (APG)

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AFRICAN GAMES OF STRATEGY

Written and Compiled by Louise Crane

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African Outreach Series, No.2

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AFRICAN OUTREACH SERIES
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The African Studies Program at the University of Illinois was established in 1971, and since 1973 it has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a national resource center for Africa. Outreach services are available to all individuals and groups interested in increasing their knowledge of Africa and its people. Our major focus is services and resources for schools, however, we also work with libraries, museums, community and church groups, inservice programs, and groups with special interest in government, agriculture, business, language, politics, art, and tourism.

The program has set as one of its priorities the development of curriculum and teacher aids for the elementary, secondary, and college levels. During the first decade of the program's outreach activities, over one hundred handouts were developed on diverse topics by our staff. Among these are a large number of classroom-tested curriculum materials that have undergone extensive revision and updating over the years. Due to the great demand for these materials, we established the African Outreach Series, which is based on the themes and topics covered in the most popular handouts. Each number in the African Outreach Series normally includes: 1) background material on the topic, written for the teacher who may have little familiarity with Africa; ii) classroom activites that have been used with success by other teachers; iii) supplementary resource materials in the form of case studies, specific examples, fact sheets, and maps; iv) a select bibliography on the topic. All the numbers in the African Outreach Series are self-contained units, though they may be used in conjunction with one another or with other teaching materials.

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No. 1 African Names: People and Places, 1982

No. 2 African Games of Strategy, 1982

No. 3 African Recipes, 1983 (forthcoming)

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AFRICAN GAMES OF STRATEGY

A Teaching Manual
(African Outreach Series, No. 2)

Written and Compiled by Louise Crane

African Studies Program
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
1982

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PREFACE

This manual, second in our African Outreach Series, incorporates some of our former handouts on African board games, as well as some new materials from other sources. Its purpose is to bring together in one source information about, and detailed playing instructions for, some of the most common types of African games involving strategy and mathematical principles. Other types of game books (e.g., musical games, active or playground games, riddles, and puzzles) will be produced later in the series.

Special acknowledgment is due Claudia Zaslavsky for contributing the game Murabaraba, for reading the manuscript, and for giving helpful advice on the project. Her publications, which have been consulted extensively, are listed in the bibliography. We would also like to thank *Africa Report* (African-American Institute) for the use of their map, the many classroom teachers and students who have cooperated in testing the games and activities associated with them, and our own faculty and students for their advice and help. Finally, we thank Cleota Cord for so cheerfully coping with a difficult typing project.

INTRODUCTION

Writing of his experiences in Nigeria during the colonial era, G.T. Basden, a British missionary, commented:

> ...the black man himself does not know his own mind. He does the most extraordinary things and cannot explain why he does them. He is not controlled by logic; he is the victim of circumstance and his policy is very largely one of drift.*

Yet a little later, while describing the Igbo game of Okwe, he professed astonishment at the careful strategy laid out by African players:

> A white man usually has no chance against a good native player.**

As anyone who seriously has studied African games has discovered, the stereotype of the simple-minded "native" has long since been denied by the abundant evidence of rules and complicated game strategies made by Africans, not out of pure chance but through carefully thought out design.

Appreciation of African games has increased in this country. Some of these games--especially the board game known generically as "mankala"--have been popularized through commercial versions such as Kalah and Pitfall. More and more frequently, African games are being used in the classroom. The work of Claudia Zaslavsky, Donald W. Crowe, and other American specialists in mathematics who have consulted with their counterparts in Africa has helped American teachers discover that African board games and the related geometric patterns and designs are invaluable resources for studying mathematics, art, architecture, and other subjects requiring mathematical concepts (e.g., computer sciences). As will be discussed in more detail further on, African games are also relevant to social studies, history, geography, language, and other subjects.

The growing popularity of African games and their use in the classroom has resulted, however, in some confusion over the "right" or "authentic" name and rules. A game with essentially the same rules will often assume various names, depending upon the group of people who play it or the country in which it is played. In other words, different ethnic or nationality groups play the same game, perhaps with slight variations, but call it a different name. An example of this is the game known variously as Oware, Wari, Adi, Ayo, Awele, or Okwe, which is described in Part II of this manual. As will be seen, there are some classic rules that apply almost identically to all of these games and to other games from other African countries, regardless of their names.

Along with the many variations in names, there often are different playing rules for the same game. Even for a game of one name in a

*G.T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1966), p. 9.

**_Ibid._, p. 136.

particular country there can be several sets of playing rules. For example, the Yoruba game of Ayo, from Nigeria, has simplified versions for children and more complicated rules for experienced and champion players.

In presenting some of Africa's better known games, along with their various names, we have tried to choose the simplest and most common rules for this manual. It should be pointed out, however, that it is quite in order for teachers and/or students, having first learned the African rules described here, to make up their own rules, as Africans themselves often do.

Organization of This Unit

This book is arranged in four parts: Background to African Games, Some African Games and How to Play Them, and Supplementary Materials, all of which are cross-referenced, plus a Bibliography.

PART I: BACKGROUND TO AFRICAN GAMES

Three different categories of strategy games are discussed in this manual: 1) games of alignment, covering African versions of three-in-a-row games like Tic-Tac-Toe or Nine Men's Morris; 2) struggle for territory, covering African versions of Checkers; and 3) mankala, one of the oldest types of board games, involving dropping seeds into holes or cups on a board, which has special associations with Africa.

So that teachers will be better able to place these games within their African context, this section provides general information on the history and purpose of African games, the players, special customs surrounding play (including the role of women and children), and how these games reflect their African environment. The background section also includes a brief discussion of the internationalization of games.

PART II: SOME AFRICAN GAMES AND HOW TO PLAY THEM

This section provides some samples of African board games. We have tried to give examples of the three types of strategy games from all over the continent--North, South, East, and West:

Category I: Games of Alignment (Three-in-a-Row Games)

Shisima from Kenya, Achi from Ghana, and Murabaraba from Lesotho

Category II: Struggle for Territory (African Checkers)

Seega from Egypt and Kei from Sierra Leone

Category III: Mankala (Holes or Cups)

Two-row mankala: Oware from Ghana, along with the variations found in Adi, also from Ghana, and Ayo and Okwe, both from Nigeria. Also, simplified rules for very young children.

Four-row mankala: Omweso from Uganda and Tshisolo from Zaire.

Brief comments about the game and/or its players, illustrations of the playing equipment, and detailed instructions, along with diagrams demonstrating moves and strategies, are given for each of these games.

PART III: SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

The materials contained in this section are designed to be used in conjunction with the background information in Part I and the games described in Part II.

The section first gives some ideas for making different types of board games. There are instructions for making the flat boards needed for Shisima, Achi, Murabaraba, Seega, and Kei, including the exact equipment needed, the size of the boards, the playing patterns, and how to construct and mount the boards and make the counters. Instructions are also given for making the boards with holes or cups that are used in the mankala games. These range from the very simple egg cartons to the more complex wooden boards. Along with these instructions are some illustrations of actual playing boards, as well as samples of African symbols and designs for decorating the boards.

Suggestions for additional classroom activities that might be used in connection with the games also are presented in this section.

The Supplementary Materials also include some brief notes on the people and customs associated with three of the mankala games presented in this manual: "The Asante People of Ghana," who play Oware; "The Baganda People of Uganda," who play Omweso; and "The Baluba People of Zaire," who play Tshisolo.

In addition to these case studies, there are other resources that provide further information on the mankala games. "Mankala Games: Where They Are Found and What They Are Called" is a partial listing that is designed to clarify the various names given to two-row and four-row mankala games, according to the country and language or ethnic group. This list includes countries both inside and outside Africa so it can be used for international comparative purposes. One of the maps, entitled "Spread of the Mankala Games," shows the concentration and geographical distribution of the mankala-type games.

Finally, a recent, reproducible map of African countries and their capitals has been included so that teachers and students alike can easily locate the countries in which these games are played.

PART IV: BIBLIOGRAPHY

While this book brings together a wide variety of three of the major types of games played in Africa, with samples from different parts of the continent, there is much more information available. The book *Omweso*, for instance, from which the simplified instructions for the four-row board game from Uganda were drawn, contains no less than thirteen other diagrams demonstrating possible strategies for grouping the counters used in the game. Our partially annotated bibliography includes references used in

developing this book as well as materials for those interested in pursuing the subject more deeply.

How to Use This Manual

As with others in the African Outreach Series, this book is a self-contained unit, which is adaptable to any level--from kindergarten to college. It can be used by a teacher with no previous special knowledge of Africa or African games or by one more experienced.

Whether this manual is used as background for a game-making project, in a study unit on games, or as part of a mathematics, history, social studies, or language arts course, we suggest that teachers first read the background section to gain some general insight into the traditions and customs surrounding African games. An examination and perhaps testing of some of the games presented in Part II will provide teachers with a better grasp of the possibilities for using the games. A quick look at the Supplementary Materials will permit teachers to formulate ideas on how the games might be incorporated into their particular areas of interest. Some familiarity with the overall contents will make it easier to select those games and associated activities best suited to the teacher's objectives and the students' comprehension levels.

As already suggested, these games are particularly applicable to the study of mathematics, offering a small child practical experience in counting and decision-making skills and challenging more advanced students to develop strategies based on carefully thought out mathematical concepts. Study of the board designs, some of which are found in major collections of African art, can inspire creative activity, ranging from simply adapting egg cartons to making more elaborate replicas of the original boards. There are also numerous opportunities for applying these games to the study of other subjects. In a history or geography class, students might trace the origins and geographical spread of some of the games from ancient times to the present. In social studies classes, the games offer a unique way of approaching the cultural environment of Africa or particular ethnic groups in Africa or studying religious associations, the role of sexes and age groups, and modern practices in Africa. In language courses, students might identify and trace the various names of the games. Most important, the study of games offers innumerable opportunities for cross-cultural comparison and the development of a special appreciation of African people and their contributions.

These are games that should be taken home, where they can be enjoyed as family entertainment and shared with friends. Many teachers and parents have commented on their value in establishing individual and group relationships, not to mention other aspects of human development.

Note on Pronunciation and Spelling

The pronunciation guides given for African words generally follow the phonetic system given in standard American and English dictionaries. Since no standard system for spelling the over one thousand African languages has been universally accepted, variations on the spellings of the games will be found. For the sake of simplicity, consistent spellings have been used throughout this manual.

PART I
BACKGROUND TO AFRICAN GAMES

BACKGROUND TO AFRICAN GAMES

In this book we will be discussing and demonstrating some of the board games most commonly found in Africa today. All of these involve strategy and are based on mathematical principles. They roughly fall into three main categories:

1. Games of Alignment (three-in-a-row or five-in-a row), which are similar to our Tic-Tac-Toe or Nine Men's Morris.

2. Struggle for Territory, similar to Checkers or Draughts.

3. Mankala (also spelled mancala), which is the generic name (derived from the Arabic word *naqala,* "to move") for the world's oldest game involving calculative strategies for dropping and capturing seeds in holes or cups on a board. As the listing in the Supplementary Materials section shows (see pp. 47-48), many games, especially in the northern parts of Africa, have names derived directly from this generic name (e.g., Mankalah in Egypt, Mancal in Ethiopia, and Magala in Sudan). But, as the listing also indicates, there are many other mankala-type games with names from local languages (e.g., the two-row games of Oware in Ghana, Wori in Liberia, Ayo and Okwe in Nigeria, or Awele in Ivory Coast; or the four-row games of Omweso in Uganda, Tshisolo in Zaire, and Bao in Tanzania). The mankala-type of game is sometimes called "African Chess" because of its close association with Africa, but it is actually quite different from Chess.

Our use of the term "board game" does not necessarily refer to an actual board made from wood or other material. All of the games described here have been, and still are, played on any flat surface with lines drawn in the sand or on a rock or with holes dug in the ground. Their history, however, is traced largely through the more permanent boards (made of stone, wood, clay, gold, silver, bronze, or ivory) which have been found or through drawings discovered in ancient ruins.

The Origin and Purpose of African Games

It is known that games resembling Chess, Checkers, Backgammon, Nine Men's Morris, and mankala have been played for over 4,000 years in some parts of the world, including Africa. According to H.J.R. Murray's survey of world board games, however, the only existing records for the first 2,000 years are on the walls of Egyptian tombs and in some few ancient manuscripts. Wall paintings on the tomb of Rashepes (2500-2400 B.C.), for example, show figures playing Senet, a mankala-type Egyptian game. At a temple built by Egyptian kings around 1300 B.C. in the present-day village of Kurna or El Qurna on the west bank of the Nile, several types of board games (e.g., mankala cups and a diagram similar to Nine Men's Morris) were found cut into the roofing slabs. The checkers-type Egyptian game of Seega (see pp. 15-16) also was scratched (much more recently) onto the Kurna slabs as well as on the Great Pyramid.

Many questions remain about the origin of these games and how they

came to Africa. With a few exceptions, the three-in-a-row and checkers-type games appear to have arrived in Africa more recently than the mankala games. Both of these types of games possibly were introduced through Europe and Asia. The origin of mankala is still debated, but there is some evidence that it was invented as a system of record keeping by the ancient Sumerian civilization (before 3000 B.C.) in Mesopotamia, modern Iraq. Its name, from the Arabic verb *naqala* meaning "to move," suggests the game was introduced to Africa through Arab traders. However it got there, mankala is a type of game that has been most identified with and influenced by Africa. Very old examples of it have been found in the stone ruins of Great Zimbabwe (in modern Zimbabwe), in Ghana, and in Uganda and were cut into a giant stone megalith in Ethiopia. In Zaire, Uganda, and other areas, mankala cups have been taken out of prehistoric digs.

Many of the board games (especially mankala) found at the shrines and temples traditionally had religious association. The games frequently were related to concepts of the universe. Referring to a symbolic representation of mankala found in a Nigerian temple, a priest explained that the game was taught to men to help them gain some control over the world. The stones used in the game represented the stars, with the board facing east and west. Moving the stones imitated the gods' moves in space and time, with the holes of the board representing the months of the year. Thus the game represented the organized world.

According to the Alladians of Ivory Coast, the gods themselves played Awele, a version of mankala, starting at twilight and playing through the night. If the gods abandoned it, they risked immediate death. Imitating the gods, rival contenders for the throne would play Awele all night when a chief died.

Players

In some countries board games were reserved almost exclusively for kings, princes, and their families. Part of the accession ritual to the 500 year old kingship of Buganda (in modern Uganda) required the Kabaka, the prospective king, to go and pick the *empiki*, the playing seeds to be used in the Omweso game kept in the court hall. The Katikkiro, or prime minister, played the game while deciding court cases. (See pp. 29-32 for instructions on how to play this game and pp. 45-46 for additional information on the Buganda people.)

Besides playing with the Katikkiro and other senior chiefs, the Kabaka played Omweso with his wives and sisters. However, the game generally was forbidden to "ordinary" women, especially those of lower social status. Such women were warned that if they put their hands in the Omweso holes, their crops would not bear food. Young girls were told that their breasts would not develop so they could never get married.

Such discrimination against women has been fairly common in the game traditions of Africa. Sometimes it arose out of husbands' fears of the repercussions of their wives' mixing with other men. More often it seemingly

stemmed from men's fear that the games would distract the women from the work they were supposed to do, especially the growing and preparation of food. Women's intellectual inferiority was often assumed; thus, they were "allowed" to play, along with the children, only simplified versions of the games. Sometimes the men imposing these rules have revealed their own insecurity. In Zaire, for example, when some older women became champions in playing Tshisolo, some men tried to put a stop to their playing the game. (See pp. 33-35 for instructions on how to play this game and p. 46 for more information on the people who play Tshisolo.)

There have been some situations in which women have freely played games. In Ghana, for example, women have been playing games similar to Oware (see pp. 23-26) for over a hundred years. In the Niger Delta, Ikiokota, another mankala-type game, has long been popular among women and girls.

In general, men and women traditionally have played the games separately. Though tradition persists in certain areas, sexual segregation and discrimination in gaming is slowly disappearing. In this manual, we have indicated, when possible, the gender background of the games, but in giving the instructions we have used the sexes interchangeably.

Children, too, sometimes have been excluded from some of the board games, partly because they, like women, traditionally shared a substantial part of the work load. For example, young boys in Uganda were not allowed to play Omweso, even in their homes, because of the herding and other work they had to do. However, the Omweso holes found on many flat rocks in Uganda show the children had their own ways of getting by the restrictions. In spite of varying attitudes of parents about the value of the games, children have been and still are playing them widely, especially the three-in-a-row types like Shisima (p. 11) or Achi (p. 12) or simpler versions of Checkers, such as Seega. Because the mankala games tend to be more complicated, younger children play simpler versions of them, such as J'odu, the children's version of Ayo (a game played by the Yoruba in Nigeria), or Ngulungu, a children's version of Tshisolo (a Luba game from Zaire).

Customary Playing Time

Until recently, in most African countries the games usually were played in the late afternoon or evening, after the day's work was done. There often were strict taboos against playing during the daytime. Occasionally, however, there were taboos against playing after sunset. In Uganda, for instance, there was a taboo against playing Omweso at night. Here it was believed that if a jackal, owl, or hyena cried out (more likely to happen after sunset) while an Omweso game was being played, the only way to avoid a calamity was to take the *empiki*, the counters, one by one to the spring and wash them.

The "Boards"

As previously mentioned, the playing equipment for the games can vary from lines or holes drawn or dug in the ground or on a rock to the elaborate

boards found in major African art collections today. In general, children use their own improvisations for all types of games, drawing the boards in the ground and adapting whatever is handy for the counters. For instance, they might use stones, seeds, pellets of cow or camel dung, palm stalks, or sticks, whereas adults might use cowry shells or ivory balls. Most of the permanent boards, made from stone, wood, clay, ivory, gold, bronze, and/or various combinations of these and other materials, are for the mankala-type games.

Sizes and shapes of the boards depend partly on the number of rows and/or holes used in the particular game. In the mankala games, the number of rows can be two, three, or four, with as many as fifty holes in a row (e.g., the Masai game of Guehe in Kenya). The most common boards used today are two-row and four-row, with six to eight holes per row.

Some of the mankala boards are mounted on pedestals and decorated with figures or geometric designs made of ivory, silver, cowry shells, and other materials. (See Fig. 1. Simpler ways of constructing Oware can be found in the Supplementary Materials section, pp. 41-43.)

Fig. 1

The Asante kings, in the area of modern Ghana (once called the Gold Coast), had especially impressive boards. They made their Oware (or Wari) boards from gold and formed them in the shape of their legendary Golden Stool, symbol of the authority of the Asantahene (king). Stool shapes (see Fig. 2) still are quite popular in Africa, in part because they have a practical use as well. For example, the counters used in playing the game can be stored in the pedestal of the stool.

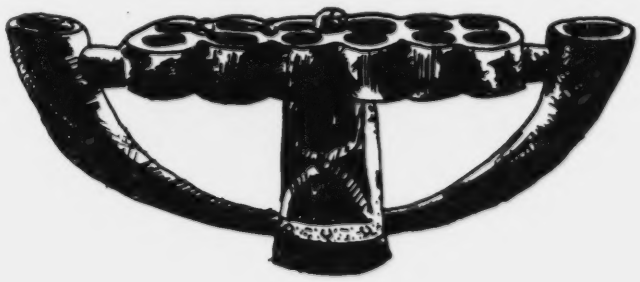


Fig. 2

Games: A Reflection of the African Context

The names of the games often reflect their African context. Many games are named after the seeds that are used as counters. For instance, Adi, the name of a game played by the Ewe people in Ghana, uses seeds from the *aditi* bush; Adi, a game of the Yoruba people in Nigeria, is played with seeds from the *ayo* tree; and Okwe, a game of the Igbo in Nigeria, is played with seeds from the *okwe* tree. Other names embody characteristics of the game or the players. For example, one Egyptian version of mankala that has strict rules is called Li'b al-ghastim, which means "game of the unlearned," while another, allowing more freedom and room for strategy, is called Li'b al-aqil, "game of the learned." Ise-Ozin-egbe, played in Benin, Nigeria, means "perseverance game."

The playing equipment and/or the moves made in the games also reflect the African context. For example, the name of the Ugandan game, Omweso, comes from the Luganda word for the board itself. Playing pieces called by such names as "houses," "dogs," "cows," and "insects" and moves such as "eating" reflect the occupations, interests, and the physical environment of the people playing them.

In contrast to the individualistic and competitive attitudes that mark so many games and sports in the United States, African games are generally a community affair. Even if there are only two players, there is sure to be a crowd of on-lookers there to see that the game is played properly. In some cases, if a player is too slow or hesitant in making a move, someone from the crowd might jump in and make the play for the person. The players themselves sometimes challenge each other with insulting or sarcastic remarks, as much to amuse the audience as to express any real hostility. Where the games are taken seriously, children are expected to develop their skills at an early age. In playing mankala, for instance, children are not allowed to pick up the seeds and count them; they must memorize and observe the number of seeds in their own cups as well as in those of their opponent.

The Internationalization of Games

Under the impact of colonialism and westernization, African games frequently were crowded out by European games. Nowadays, however, with a move back to Africanization, games like Achi, Murabaraba, and some of the mankala-type games described here are being encouraged in Africa, both for recreation and for sharpening students' academic skills, especially in mathematics. One of the most enthusiastic supporters is President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who as a child learned to play the East African game, Soro, and was a champion Chess player at college in Scotland. The president's house in Dar es Salaam is a frequent gathering place for tournaments of Soro, a four-row game like Omweso. Some years ago, Nyerere sent a detailed explanation of Bao, a similar game played in Tanzania, to another major world leader, Chairman Mao of China. Mankala-type games are also being revived and popularized in various African countries through clubs and TV programs. In Nigeria, the University of Ibadan Ayo Club recently was formed with the objective of establishing an international center for Ayo, the Yoruba version of mankala. Some African universities are even

working on computerizing them.

The diffusion of these games--especially mankala--to other parts of the world is a fascinating study that can only be touched on here. Today, versions of mankala are found in parts of Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, the Caribbean, Indonesia, the Philippines and other islands, as well as in the United States. For example, Adi in Brazil, Wari in Haiti, and Makala or Mankala in Syria are all mankala games. (See "Mankala Games: Where They are Found and What They Are Called," pp. 47-48 in the Supplementary Materials.)

In the United States, the game originally was introduced as Warri by African slaves. It got a real push in the nineties by a Syrian colony living on Washington Street in New York, where they played it under the name Chuba (Chōōbä). In 1891, the Milton-Bradley Company got out a commercial version called Chuba. Later American versions have been: Kalah, designed by William Champion and manufactured by Kalah, Inc.; Pitfall by Creative Playthings; and Oh-Wah-Ree by 3M Company, which gives instructions for six different versions.

Commercial versions of other African board games have also come out in increasing numbers. (See the Bibliography, p. 52, for names and addresses of game manufacturers and publishers.) For example, World Wide Games has manufactured and distributed Shisima, the three-in-a-row game from Kenya; Oxfam, a British educational publishing firm, has put out an instructional poster on Dara (därä), a Nigerian game in the alignment category. (Dara is also the name for a Hausa version of mankala.)

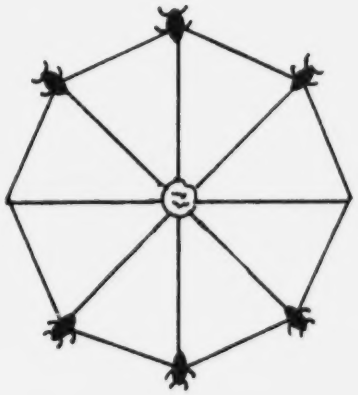
While it is gratifying that commercial producers and publishers are discovering these games, we hope this book will encourage and preserve the individual creativity that has always marked African games. In addition, we hope that teachers and students alike will come to know more about the people who play them. Certainly the increasing communication between American and African teachers and specialists in these games promises more discoveries that can benefit both continents.

PART II
SOME AFRICAN GAMES AND HOW TO PLAY THEM

SHISIMA
(Kenyan "Tic-Tac-Toe")

This game, similar to Tic-Tac-Toe, is played by the Tiriki people in Kenya. The name Shisima, which means "source of water," was inspired by watching *imbalavali*, the Tutriki word for "water insects," crawling toward the *shisima* (water source). When the Tiriki play it, they draw lines toward the *shisima* and use beans, stones, or other objects to represent the *imbalavali*.

Player I



Player II

Board: Octagonal shape, as illustrated, with three insect figures at the opposite corners on each side. The central point is drawn as a circle to suggest the water. Ideas for making the board appear in the Supplementary Materials section, p. 38-39.

Counters: Each of the two players has 3 pieces of different design to represent the crawling *imbalavali*. In the example, we use and .

Players: Two players or teams.

General Rules

1. Opening Position

   The board is placed in such a position that each player faces a group of insects (*imbalavali*). The players lay down, on their respective sides, all their pieces on top of the three corners occupied by the insects.

2. Object of the Game

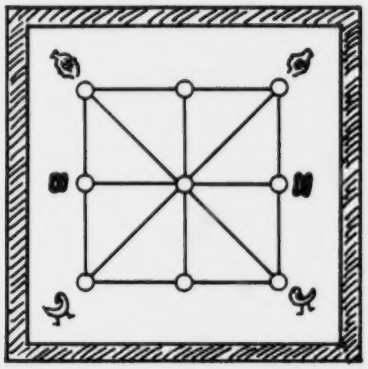
   The object of the game is to get your 3 *imbalavali* in a straight line first.

3. Moves

   The players take turns, moving one piece at a turn. Moves are made along any line (no jumping) to a vacant space. Obviously, whoever wins must have one counter in the center (in the *shisima*). However, moving there first does not necessarily guarantee winning. In spite of its seeming simplicity, this game requires some strategy!

ACHI
(A Game from Ghana)

Achi, similar to Shisima, can be played as the children do in Ghana. They draw lines on the ground, scoop out holes for the bases, and use pebbles as markers. Or, a permanent board can be made (see Supplementary Materials, pp. 39-40 for detailed instructions).



Board: Like Shisima, the board or playing diagram is designed from four lines crossing at the center and connected in a square or rectangular shape. In this design, circles mark the places where the lines meet.

Counters: Each of the two players has 3 pieces of different design. For example: and .

Players: Two players or teams.

General Rules

1. Opening Position

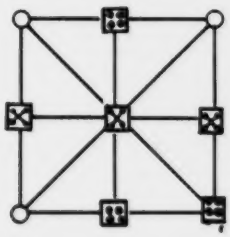
   In this game, the players take turns laying down their pieces, one at a time, at any point they choose.

2. Moves

   When all the pieces are on the board, the game proceeds as in Shisima.

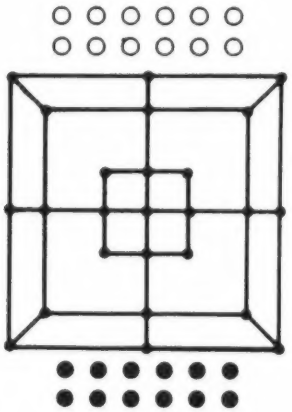
3. Object of the Game

   Again, the object is for a player to get his or her three pieces in a straight line ahead of his/her opponent.



MURABARABA
(A Game from Lesotho)

This game comes from Lesotho, a small country surrounded by South Africa. A game traditionally played by shepherd boys, it is now popular with both boys and girls.



Board: The pattern for the board (above) is marked out by African children on the ground or on a flat stone. It can be used for designing your own board. The game is played on the 25 points where the lines meet.

Counters: 12 playing pieces for each player or team (a total of 24). They should be two different colors or shapes. In this game, the two different sets will be indicated by ● and ○ .

Players: Two players or teams, identified here as Black (●) and White (○).

General Rules

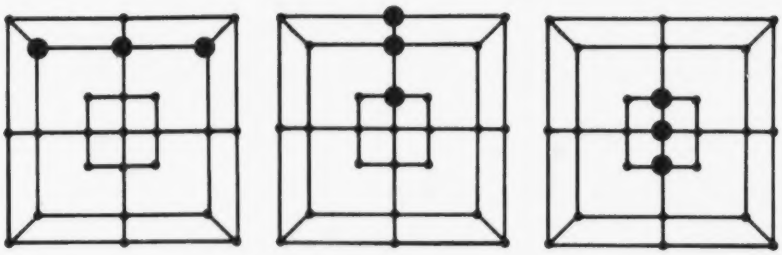
1. Opening Position

Players flip a coin to decide who goes first. They then take turns placing their pieces, one at a time, on empty points on the board until all 24 counters are laid down. (See the diagram on the bottom of the next page.)

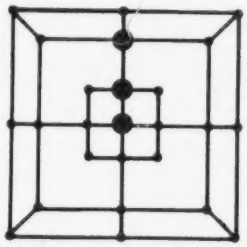
2. Object: A "Strike"

Each player tries to make a row of three counters along any side of a square or on a line joining the midpoints of the side. This is called a "strike." The player making a strike may remove one of the opponent's counters from any position on the board. Captured counters are taken out of the game.

A line of three which ends in the center of the board is not a strike.



Strike Positions



Not A Strike

A player who makes two strikes with one counter may capture two of the opponent's counters, as in the following move by White during the initial placing of the counters:

White is about to place a counter.

White has placed a counter in the center, making 2 strikes in one move.

3. Traps

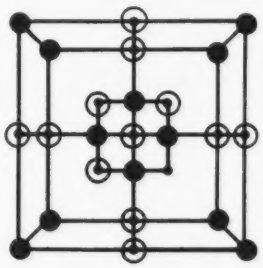
A player who has two counters in a row is in a "trap" and must complete a strike by the next move, if possible. Otherwise, the opponent can capture any two of the player's counters from the board.

4. Moving the Counters

Once the counters have been laid down, each player, in turn, moves a counter along any line to the next empty point. Jumping over pieces is not allowed. The players try to make as many "strikes" as possible. There are no "traps" in this part of the game.

5. Winning and Losing

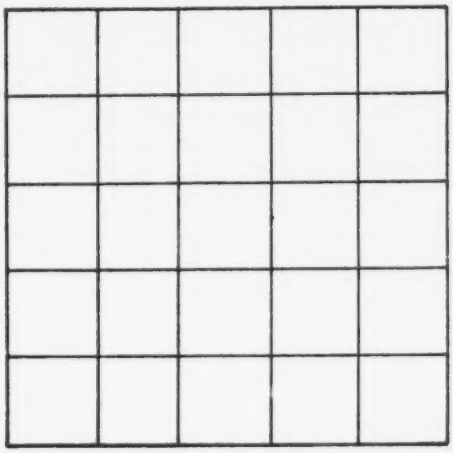
The loser is the player who has only two counters left on the board or who is blocked from moving.



In the diagram on the left, all the counters have been placed on the board. No one has made a strike or been trapped. It is Black's (●) turn to move. White (O) is in a position to win the game.

SEEGA
(Egyptian "Checkers")

The following game, as described by Ammar Hamed (see Bibliography), is played in the village of Silwa on the southern border of a province in Egypt. Though traditionally played by boys and adults, it can be played today by anyone.



Board or Playing Area: Five rows of five squares (called "eyes") or sometimes seven rows of seven squares. The five-row game is illustrated here. This game is most often played with squares or holes marked on the ground.

Counters: 12 stones or markers of different shapes or colors (called "dogs") for each of the two players (24 in all).

Players: Two players. They agree on who "throws" first (i.e., takes the first turn).

General Rules

1. Opening Position

   The first player (Player I) puts down two of his "dogs" on any of the squares, except the center one which must be kept vacant until all the pieces have been laid down. Player II follows, also placing two of her "dogs" in vacant squares.

2. Moves

   After all 24 dogs have been placed, the last person to lay down the pieces (dogs) takes the first move. The only space left to move in would be the center square or hole. Moves can be made only into adjacent vacant squares.

3. Object of the Game

   The aim is to get pieces (dogs) into squares immediately adjacent on two sides of the opponents' dog. A dog thus surrounded is "eaten" and thrown out of the game (removed from the board).

4. Winning

The winner is the person left with three dogs to his or her opponent's one.

Sample of Plays

In the game illustrated by Figures 1 and 2, Player I's dogs are marked O. Player II's dogs are marked X.

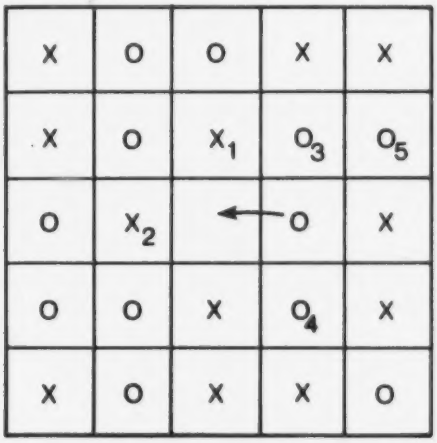


Fig. 1

If Player I moves his or her dog (O) into the center, as indicated by the arrow in Figure 1, he or she would be able to "eat" X_1 and X_2, removing them from the board.

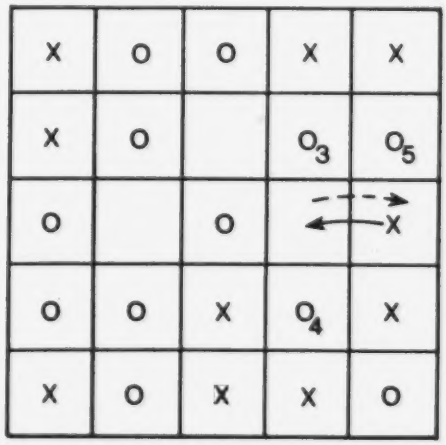


Fig. 2

Player II would then move his or her dog (X) into the vacated hole, as indicated by the solid arrow in Figure 2, and could "eat" Player I's O_3 and O_4. Since Player II is allowed by such a move to return to his or her former position (indicated by the broken arrow in Fig. 2), he or she could also "eat" O_5.

KEI
(Sierra Leone "Checkers")

This game, described as "African Checkers" by Daniel Kamanda in earlier publications of the University of Illinois African Studies Program, is played in identical or similar versions throughout North and West Africa.

It is similar to our checkers with these exceptions: a) the board has more squares (100 instead of 64) and more playing pieces (a total of 40 or, in other words, 20 instead of 12 for each player), thus making it more complicated; and b) "kings" have greater freedom since, except under certain conditions, they can jump any number of squares diagonally forward or backward. Kei includes some features special to Sierra Leone, such as "Blackman Trouble Rule." The use of the term "men" for the playing pieces suggests its origin as a war-strategy-designing activity.

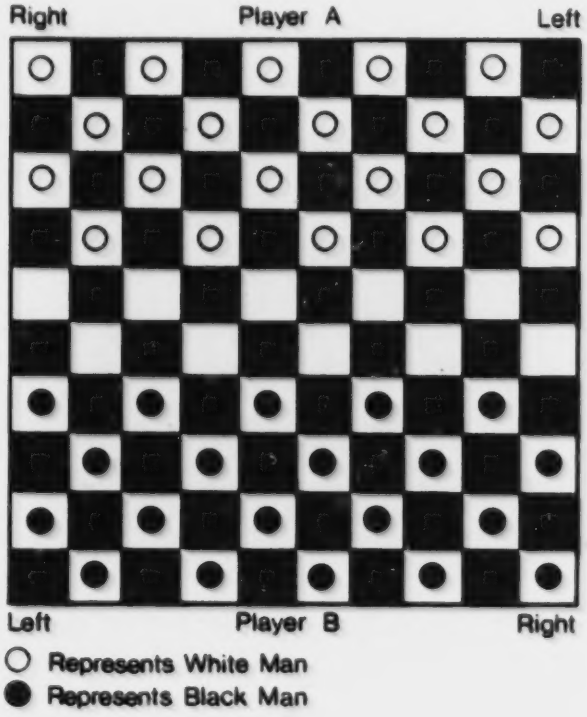


Fig. 1

Board: A large square with 10 rows of 10 small (approximately 2") alternately black and white squares. It looks like a standard chess or checkers board with the two additional rows of squares on each side.

Playing Pieces: 20 pieces (e.g., flat, wooden cylinders) for each of the two players. Each set of 20 should be distinguished by a particular color or shape. In this version, the pieces are black and white and are called "men."

Players: Two players. Others can join as part of a team, but the move for each team is made by one player.

General Rules

1. Opening Position

   Players (teams) agree on the color of the squares they will use to play on. In the game illustrated here, the white squares on the board are being used.

   Position the playing board between the two players so that the color of the first small square on the right of the first row of squares is the same as the agreed upon playing color. In this case, it is white (see Fig. 1 above).

2. Opening Play

   The player with the black "men" usually gets the first move. This is called "Blackman Trouble Rule." Sometimes there is a coin toss to decide who gets the "black men" and the first move.

3. Moves

   Players make moves alternately. When players make moves, they do so very quickly, snapping the pieces into the new position. There often is an unwritten rule that delays in play are not allowed. If the player, whose turn it is to move, pauses for lengthy contemplation, the opponent will begin tapping with a captured piece on a blank space of the board in a non-verbal but heckling way.

   Normally, players are allowed two basic moves:

   a. A strategy move is made when a man is advanced diagonally into the next empty square ahead, to the left or right (see Fig. 2 below).

   b. A capture move is made when a player's man is moved diagonally across and over the opponent's man into the very next empty square. Any number of opponents can be captured in series within the same move, but each time a capture is made, the player's man must land in the very next empty square that is diagonally across and over the opponent's man. A capture move is required whenever it is possible (see Figs. 2 and 3).

      Men can only move forward except when a capture is being made. A capture move can be made by advancing or retreating diagonally over an opponent into the very next square. One or more opponents can be captured by advancing, retreating, or by both, in series.

4. "Kings" and Their Moves

   Any man that is advanced to the first row of squares on the opponent's side becomes a "king." The king is crowned with one of the opponent's

pieces that have been captured.

A king is allowed more versatility in the moves:

a. The king may move diagonally forward or backward any number of squares, provided that he does not go over any of his own men or more than one of the opponent's men in adjacent squares.

b. When the king moves diagonally over an opponent's man or king, he captures that piece (see Fig. 5). The king also may capture further pieces in the same diagonal.

c. The king has the option of landing on any empty square along his diagonal path (whereas ordinary men must land in the very next square, unless they are making multiple captures in the same move). However, if one of the subsequent squares is on another diagonal on which an opponent's piece might be captured, the move must continue until all possible captures have been made. (see Figs. 5 and 7.)

As one becomes more experienced at playing the game, one learns various strategies which make this form of checkers much more challenging and exciting than the western game of checkers.

5. End of Game

The game is won by the player who ends up capturing all of the opponent's men.

The game is also considered won if there are still a few men left on either side but the player with the fewer number of men agrees it is only a matter of time before all of his or her men will finally be captured.

A game is considered a draw (tie) if both players agree neither of them can capture all of the opponent's remaining men.

Sample Moves of Kei

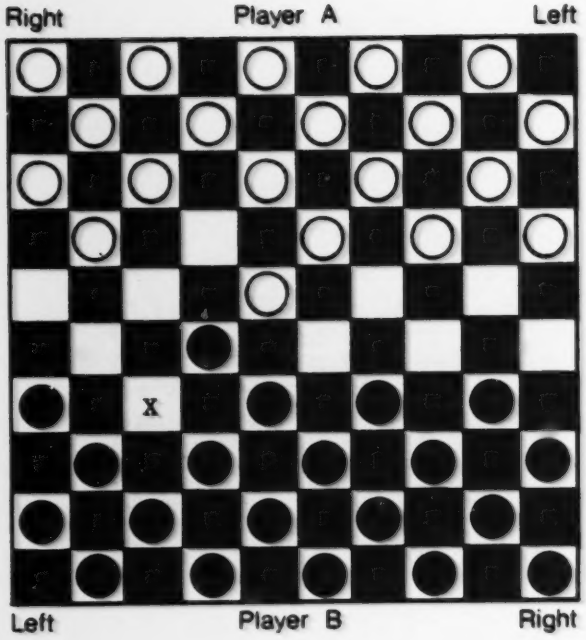


Fig. 2

Black has made his first strategy move and white has reacted accordingly. If in his next move, black does not move into the square marked X then white in his very next move must make a capture move (i.e., jump diagonally over black into the square marked X and thereby capture that particular black man).

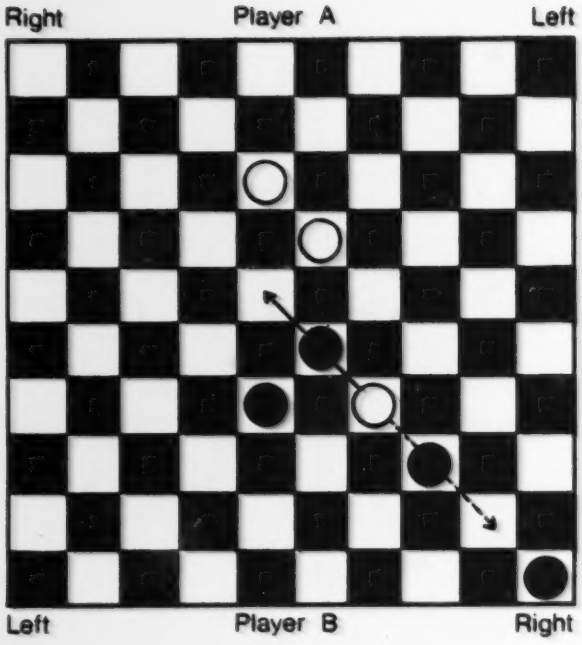


Fig. 3

White must make a single capture move. Unlike in Fig. 2, he has no choice. He can make his move either forward (broken arrow) or backward (solid arrow). In the present situation, he is well advised to move backward. This will save the captor, as well as add reinforcement to his other two remaining men.

Sample Moves of Kei

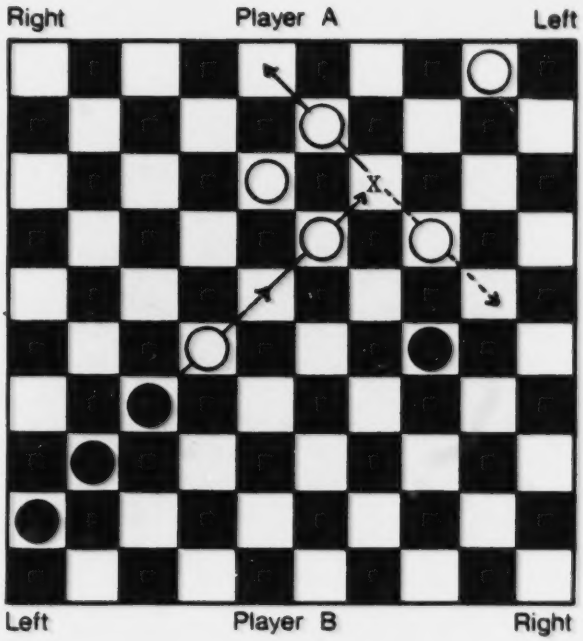


Fig. 4

Black must make a multiple capture move as shown by arrows. If he decides to move along the solid arrow all the way, that particular black man will become a black king. At square X black can decide to capture the third white man in the opposite direction along the broken arrow. In any capture move, the maximum number of captives must be taken. Remember, a capture move can be diagonally straight forward or diagonally straight backward or a combination of the two.

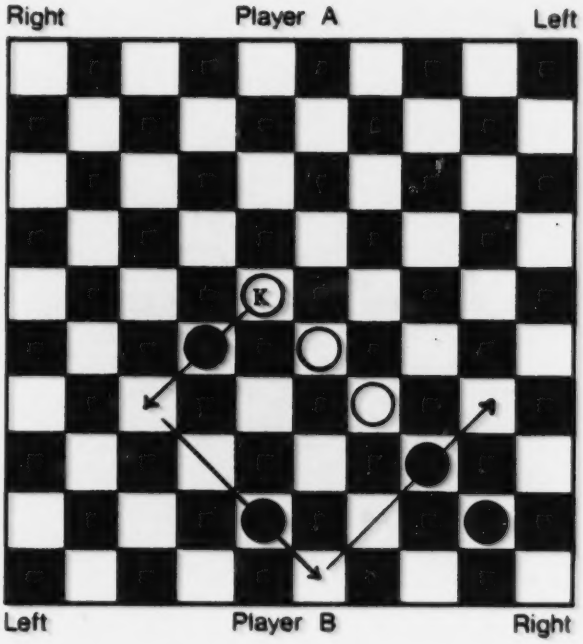


Fig. 5

The white king cannot move over his own two men. He must capture the three black men. The king has the option of landing in any empty square along his diagonal path. Ordinary men must land in the very next square, unless they are making multiple captures in the same move.

Sample Moves of Kei

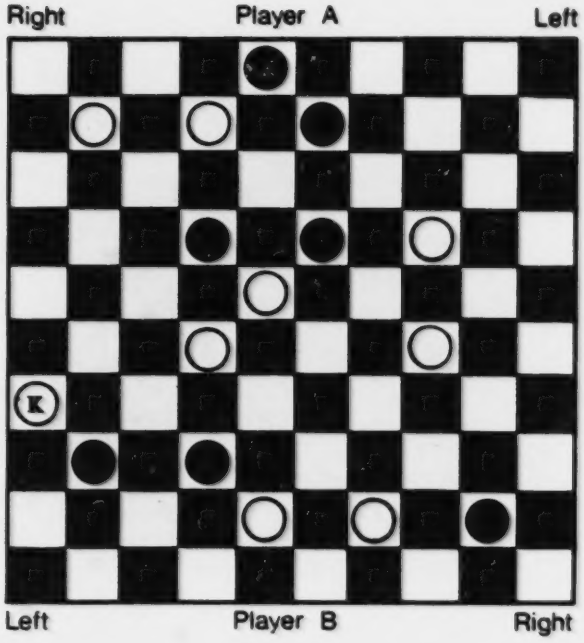


Fig. 6

In this move, one of white's pieces can capture five black men. Which piece can do it? Trace the move.

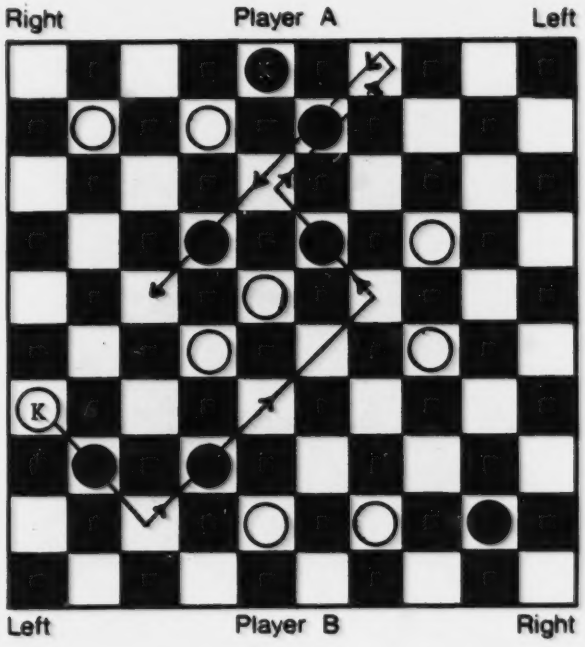
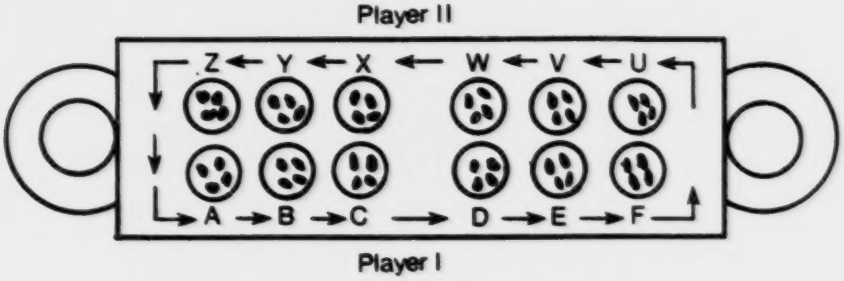


Fig. 7

One possible solution to the problem stated above is provided in Fig. 7. If this solution is chosen, black would then be in a position to take nine white pieces, thereby winning the game. Trace that move.

OWARE
(An Asante Game from Ghana)

Oware, also called Wari, is an Asante game from Ghana.* Other identical or similar games include Adi, played among the Ewe of Ghana, and Ayo, which the Yoruba play in Nigeria.



Board: Two rows of six holes or cups each. Sometimes cups are provided at each end of the board for players to store captured seeds (as in the diagram above). Directions for making the board are given in the Supplementary Materials section, pp. 41-43.

Counters: 48 seeds (stones, beads, marbles, etc.) distributed evenly between the two sides. In other words, put 4 seeds in each cup.

Players: Two players. The six cups on each player's side are his or her home cups. (For example, in the diagrams shown above and below, Player I's home cups are A-F; Player II has the row U-Z.)

Direction of Moves: Counter-clockwise all around the board.

General Rules

1. Opening Position

The game begins with four seeds (counters) in each cup (A-F, U-Z).

2. Moves

Players always begin each turn from their own home cups. To start, Player I picks up the seeds in one of the cups in row A-F and moves counter-clockwise (beginning with the next cup), placing (or sowing) the seeds, one per cup, until the seeds are used up.

Player II then does the same from his or her side, picking up all the seeds from a cup in row U-Z and dropping them one by one in

*More information on this game and the people who play it is provided in the Supplementary Materials section, p. 45.

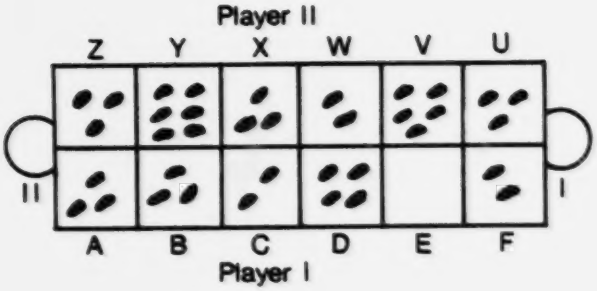
consecutive cups counter-clockwise. This process continues with both players attempting to choose cups of seeds for sowing that will enable them to capture seeds from the opponent's cups.

3. Capturing or "Eating"

Seeds are captured, or "eaten," when a player is able to drop his or her last seed into an opponent's cup that already contains one or two seeds. If she is able to do this, she captures and collects all the seeds that are in that cup (including the seed that has just been dropped in). Players may capture seeds only from their opponent's cups and not from their own cups.

A player also is allowed to collect the seeds from cups that contain only two or three seeds and lie in an unbroken sequence clockwise from the cup where the play has been ended with a capture.

Example:



Final seed of Player I went into cup X. Player I captures 3 seeds in C and 2 seeds in W.

In the above example, Player I placed her last seed in cup X on Player II's side. Since the cup contained 2 seeds before Player I's turn and now contains 3 seeds, Player I captures these 3 seeds in X. In addition, she captures the 2 seeds in W, the next cup (clockwise). Seeds in cup U are not captured even though cup U contains 3 seeds, because cup V with 5 seeds breaks the clockwise sequence of cups with 2 or 3 seeds. Captured seeds are removed from the board and placed in the container or storage cup of the player who won them. In the above example, the 5 seeds captured are placed in Player I's storage cup, I.

4. Ending the Game

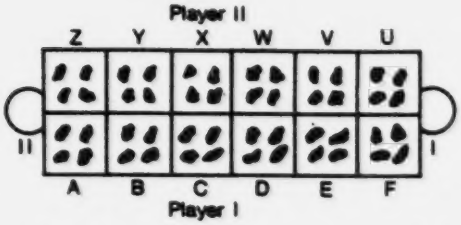
The game ends when one of the players no longer has any seeds to move. If one player has no seeds to move and it is his opponent's turn, the opponent is required, if possible, to move his seeds in a manner that will give the other player seeds to move. If this is not possible, the game ends.

5. Winning

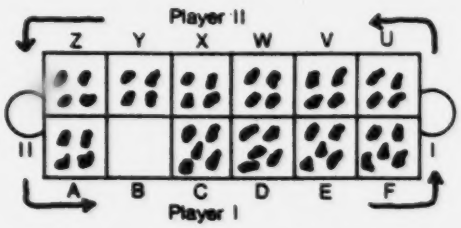
The player who captures the majority of the seeds is declared the winner of the game.

Sample Game of Oware

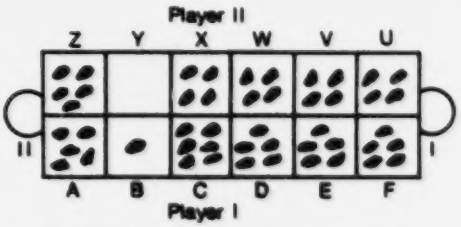
This game is designed to demonstrate the manner in which Oware is played. It should be noted, however, that in terms of strategy, it is not a well-played game. A general strategy is never to leave a home cup with only one or two seeds in it, as these may be captured by the opponent in his or her next play.



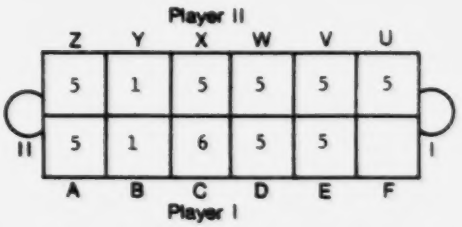
1. Position of seeds at the start of the game (4 seeds per cup).



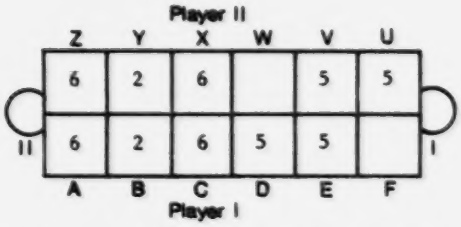
2. Player I takes the seeds from cup B and places one seed each in cups C, D, E, & F.



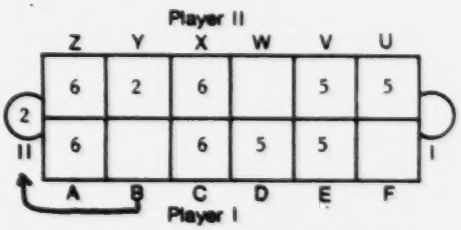
3. Player II takes seeds from cup Y and places them in cups Z, A, B, and C.



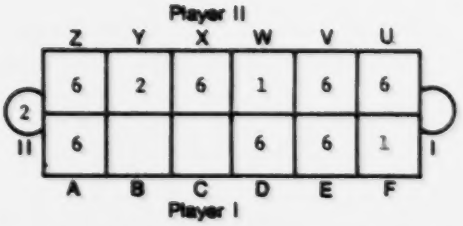
4. Player I takes seeds from cup F and places them in cups U, V, W, X, & Y.



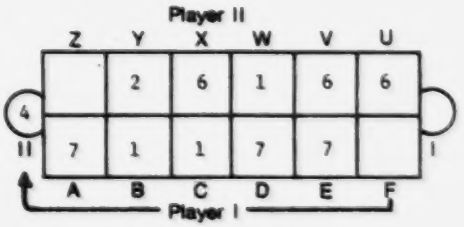
5. Player II takes seeds from cup W and places them in cups X, Y, Z, A, and B.



6. Since the last seed of Player II on this move went into an opponent's cup, B, that originally contained only 1 seed, Player II captures the 2 seeds in B, and stores them (II).

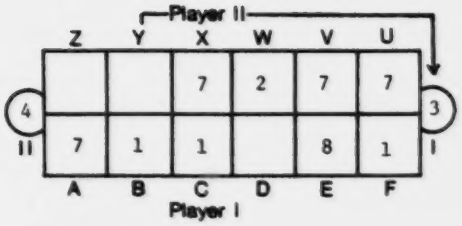


7. Player I takes the seeds from cup C and places them in cups D, E, F, U, V, and W.

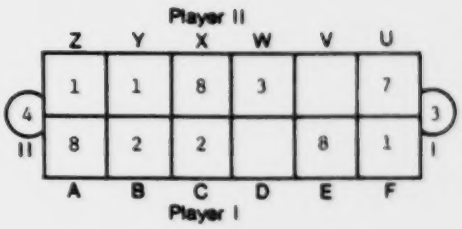


8. Player II takes seeds from cup Z, places them in cups A, B, C, D, E, & F, and captures 2 seeds in F.

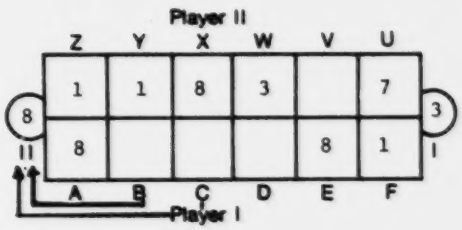
Sample Game of Oware (continued)



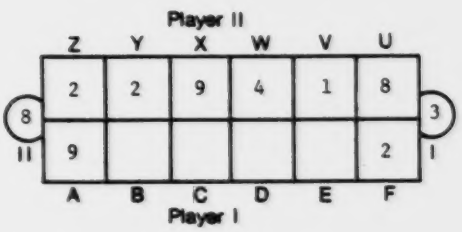
9. Player I takes the seeds from cup D, places them in cups E, F, U, V, W, X, & Y and captures 3 seeds in Y. These are placed in I's storage cup.



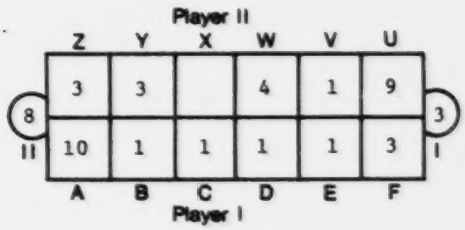
10. Player II takes the seeds from cup V and places them in cups W, X, Y, Z, A, B, & C.



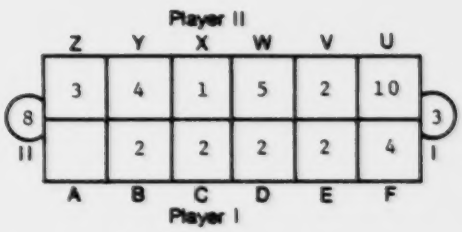
11. Player II captures the 2 seeds in C. In addition he/she captures the 2 seeds in cup B.



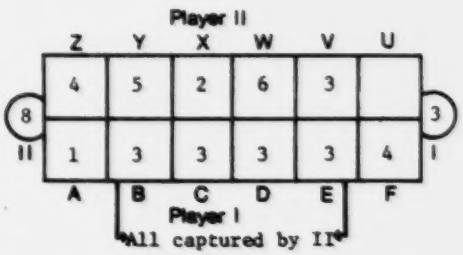
12. Player I takes seeds from cup E.



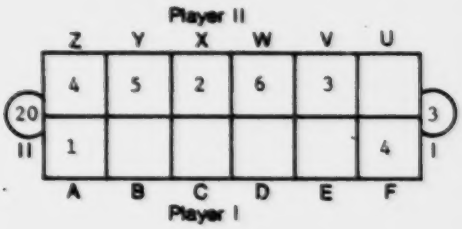
13. Player II chooses cup X.



14. Player I chooses cup A.



15. Player II chooses U and, landing in E., captures 3 seeds in each of cups E, D, C, & B (12 seeds).



16. Player II places the 12 captured seeds in storage.

The game continues until 1) one player has captured more than 24 seeds or 2) one player has no more seeds to move.

VARIATIONS OF OWARE

Most of the other West African two-row games--such as Adi, Awele, Ayo, and Okwe--are played by practically the same rules as Oware. Some have variations, however, especially in the rules concerning when a turn ends and the method of capture. For example:

1. End of Turn

   In Adi (played among the Ewe people in Ghana) and in J'odu, a children's version of Ayo (played among the Yoruba in Nigeria), if the last seed in a player's hand falls in a hole containing other seeds, all of the seeds in the hole are picked up and the player continues dropping them until the last seed falls in an empty hole; then the turn ends.

   In Ayoyayo, the adult game of Ayo, the rules are identical to those of Oware.

2. Capturing

   In Adi, captures are made when the last seed in the player's hand forms a group of 4 on either side.

   In J'odu (children's Ayo) and in one version of Okwe (played by the Igbo in Nigeria), captures are made when the last seed drops in an empty hole on the player's own side, opposite one on the opponent's side containing 1 to 3 seeds. In this case, the player takes the seeds from the opposite side, plus his or her own seed, and puts them in his/her container.

   In Figure 1 below, Player I takes the seeds from cup F on her side and ends in A (now empty). Ending in the empty cup (A), Player I can capture the 3 seeds in the opposite cup (Z) on Player II's side. Player I takes these 3 seeds, plus the 1 seed dropped in A, and puts them (a total of 4) in her own container (see Fig. 2 below).

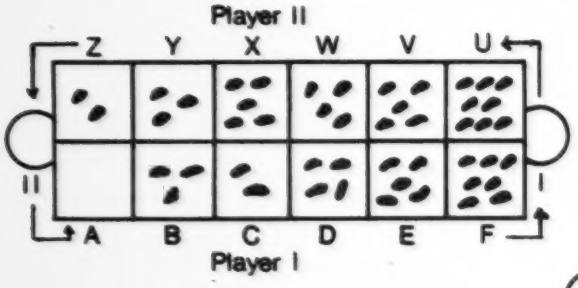


Fig. 1

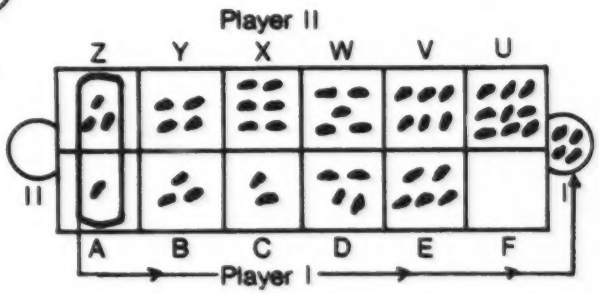


Fig. 2

SIMPLIFIED RULES FOR TWO-ROW GAMES
(For Very Young Children)

The two players, I and II, starting with four (4) seeds in each of the 12 holes, face each other and take turns. At the beginning, the board (with containers at the side) will look like this:

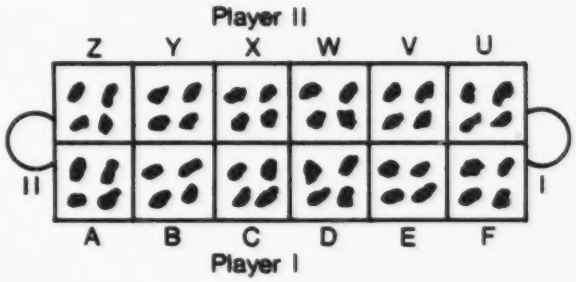


Fig. 1

Player I picks up all the seeds in any hole ("house") on his or her side (∧ on side I) and drops one in each of the succeeding holes, moving counter-clockwise (Fig. 2). Player II takes a turn, picking up all the seeds in any cup on his or her side (∨ on side II) and dropping them counter-clockwise into succeeding holes (Fig. 3):

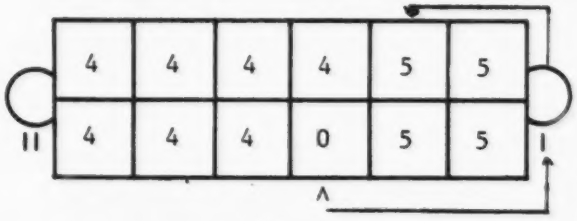


Fig. 2

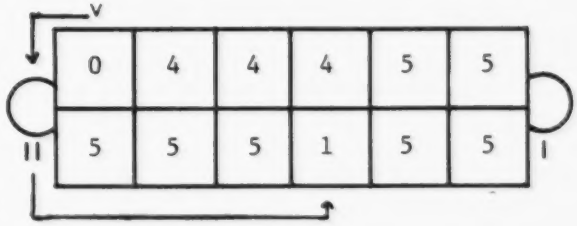


Fig. 3

When the last seed from either player's hand falls in a hole on the opponent's side which contains 1 or 2 seeds (making a total of 2 or 3), the player removes all the seeds from that hole (2 or 3) and puts them in his or her container. For example, after the game has progressed a bit, the last seed from Player I's hand might fall into a hole on Player II's side which contains 2 seeds, thus making a total of 3 (see * in Fig. 4) Player I then removes the 3 seeds and puts them in his or her own container (see * in Fig. 5):

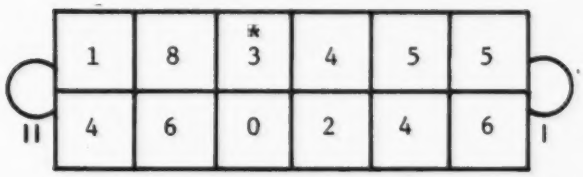


Fig. 4

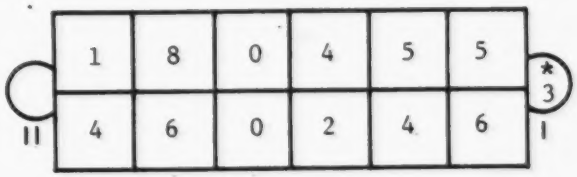
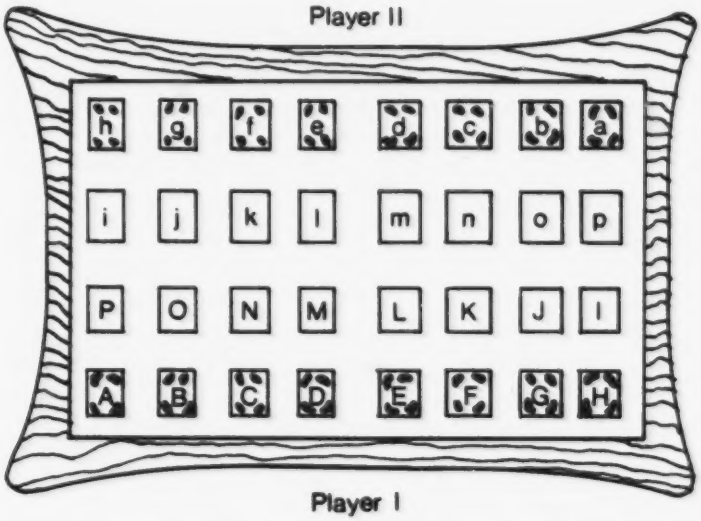


Fig. 5

When either player captures 10 or 12 seeds (or any total number agreed upon in advance), he or she is declared the winner.

OMWESO
(A Baganda Game from Uganda)

Also called Mweso, this is a four-row game played by the Baganda people in Uganda.* Other names for identical or similar versions in East Africa include: Bao (played by the Swahili people), Soro (by the Lugbara, Alur, and Kakwa), Orusoro (by the Runyoro and Rutoro), and Coro (by the Acholi).



Board: Four rows, 8 holes per row. Ideas for making the board are given in the Supplementary Materials section, pp. 41-43.

Counters: 64 seeds called *empiki* (stones, beads, beans, and the like may be substituted) divided evenly between the players (32 per side).

Players: Two players, or others helping as a part of two teams. Each player (or team) moves within the two rows directly in front of him or her. For example, in the illustration above and diagrams below, Player I's home territory and playing space is back row A-H and inner row I-P. Player II has home cups and moves on the back row a-h and inner row i-p.

Direction of Moves: Normally counter-clockwise. Reverse (clockwise) moves are permitted under certain conditions that are detailed below.

General Rules

1. Opening Position

   Each player groups four counters in each of the holes on his or her own back row (i.e., A-H and a-h). (See the above illustration and Fig. 1 below.)

*More information on this game and the people who play it is provided in the Supplementary Materials section, pp. 45-46.

An optional step, for experienced players, is to regroup the counters on each side to achieve the most strategic positions (e.g., so that a player can make more than a full round movement). We are omitting the regrouping here, but refer anyone interested to *Omweso*, a detailed instruction book by M.B. Nsimbi (see Bibliography), which illustrates 13 possible grouping patterns.

2. Moves

Either side may open the game. After the first game, the loser usually starts the next game, but this is optional.

Player I may start in any hole on his side, picking up all the seeds and dropping them, one by one, in consecutive holes counter-clockwise on his own two rows, A-H and I-P. If the last seed in his hand drops in a hole containing other seeds, he picks up all the seeds in that hole or cup and continues dropping the seeds in sequence. His turn ends when the last seed in his hand falls into an empty cup.

Player II takes a turn, starting at any cup on his rows, a-h and i-p, picking up and dropping the seeds in the manner must described for Player I. (See Fig. 3 below.)

3. Capturing

If the last seed in a player's hand falls in an occupied hole on his or her own inner row (i.e., I-P or i-p), the player may capture any seeds contained in the holes directly opposite on the opponent's side, provided they both contain seeds. (See Fig. 4 below.)

The player then collects the captured seeds and, starting from the hole next (counter-clockwise) to the one on his own side from which the capture was made, drops them one by one in counter-clockwise sequence. (See Fig. 5 below.) Only the captured seeds (see d and m in Fig. 4 below) are moved. The player's own seeds remain where they have dropped (see, e.g., Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 where the 2 seeds in L are not moved).

4. Capturing by Reverse Movement

Players can also capture exposed counters or seeds by making a reverse move. In other words, they may go clockwise from any of their last two holes in each row on their left hand side. For Player I, this would be A, B, P, and O; for Player II, it is a, b, p, and o.

No more than 9 seeds can be used in a single reverse movement. Further, reverse movements are allowed only for the purpose of capturing.

When feasible, the captured counters can be used for another reverse play, starting at the hole or cup next (clockwise) to the starting cup of the previous reverse play. Or, they can be used in a forward play from the cup next (counter-clockwise) to the starting cup of the reverse play.

In the following example, Player I moves the 4 seeds in P in reverse (clockwise), dropping the last seed into L, thereby capturing the seeds in Player II's opposite holes, d and m (a total of 10 seeds). Since no further reverse moves are possible, the next play (not shown) would be forward, starting at the hole next (forward) to P (i.e., A).

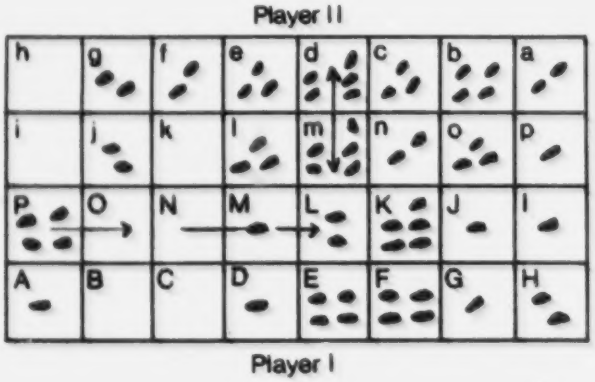


Figure 6 (below) gives examples of two captures by reverse movement, with a return to a forward (counter-clockwise) movement.

5. Winning

The winner is the player who either captures all the seeds or leaves the opponent with one seed or less in each cup, making it impossible to move.

Examples of Omweso plays are on the next page.

Sample Plays of Omweso

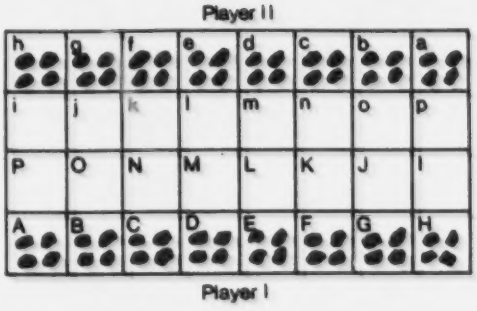


Fig. 1
Placement of counters at the start of the game: 4 in each hole of the outer rows (a-h, A-H).

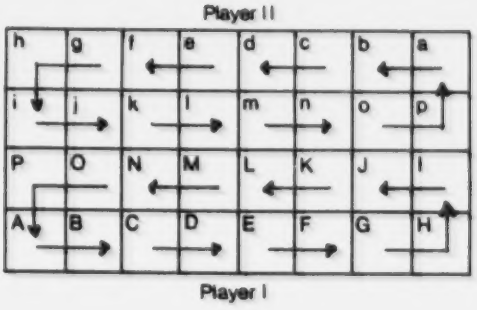


Fig. 2
Normal directions of moves (counter-clockwise).

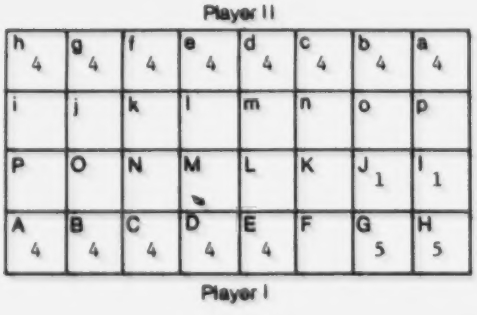


Fig. 3
First move by Player I: Starting at F, he or she picks up the 4 seeds and drops them one by one in consecutive holes G, H, I, and J.

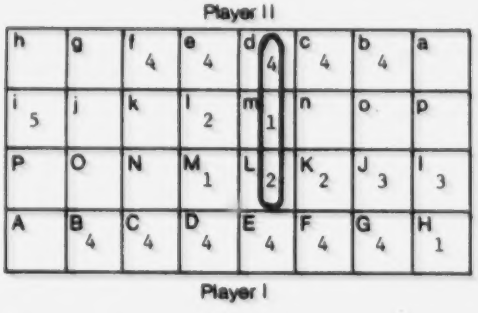


Fig. 4
A later move by Player I: Drops the last seed in his or her hand in L, opposite two occupied holes (d and m) of Player II; captures seeds in d and m (4 + 1).

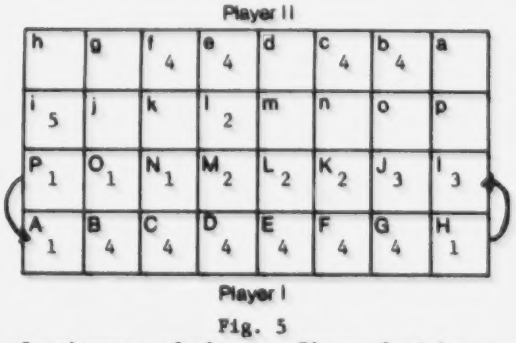


Fig. 5
Continuance of player: Player I picks up the 5 seeds captured in Fig. 4 and drops them, one by one, starting at H. The turn ends when the last seed drops in the empty hole A.

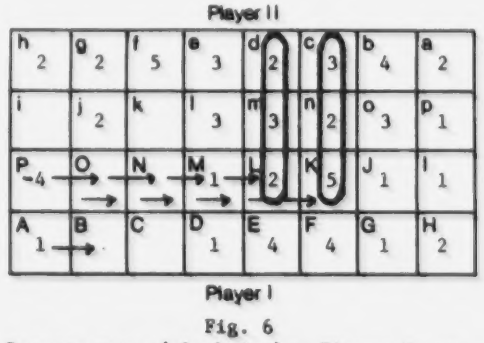
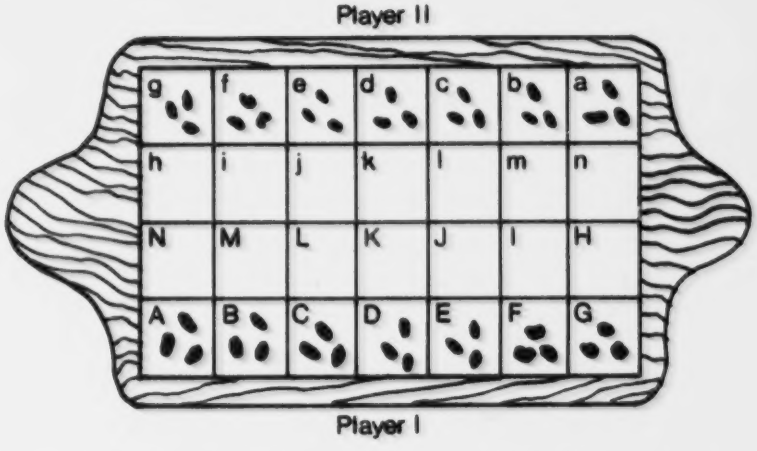


Fig. 6
Reverse move (clockwise): Player I reverses with 4 seeds from P to capture seeds in d and m (2 + 3). In a second reverse move, starting from O, Player I drops the 5 seeds, one by one, ending at K, where he or she captures seeds from c and n (3 + 2). Starting at A (next to where he/she started the reverse move), the player now moves counter-clockwise (forward) as before.

TSHISOLO
(A Luba Game from Zaire)

Also called Kisolo, this game is played by the Baluba people in Zaire. It has other names in Zaire and Central Africa, including: Lisolo (among the Bembe), Tshiela (among the Tshokwe and Lunda), and Kisumbi (among the Basanga). With some variations, it is similar to the Swahili game, Bao, and the Baganda game of Omweso.



Board: Four rows, 7 (or 8) holes per row. A 7-hole row is demonstrated here. Ideas for making the board are given in the Supplementary Materials section, pp. 41-43.

Counters: Nuts or seeds called *lusolo* (plural, *nsolo*) meaning "chicken." 42 *nsolo* for a 7-hole board, divided evenly (21 for each player) or 64 *nsolo* for an 8-hole board, divided evenly (32 for each side).

Players: Two players. Each player moves within the two rows directly in front of him or her. In the example given here, Player I's home territory and playing space is back row A-G and inner row H-N. Player II's home area is back row a-g and inner row h-n. Players decide beforehand who will be the one to begin the game. The first to play is called *Mutukananyi* or the "Attacker" (here designated Player I). The second player is *Mutukwa*, the "Attacked" (Player II in our example).

Direction of Moves: Counter-clockwise within each player's home row.

General Rules

1. Opening Position

   Each player lays down his or her 21 *nsolo* in his/her back row, three in each cup (see Fig. 1 on the next page).

*More information on this game and the people who play it is provided in the Supplementary Materials section, p. 46.

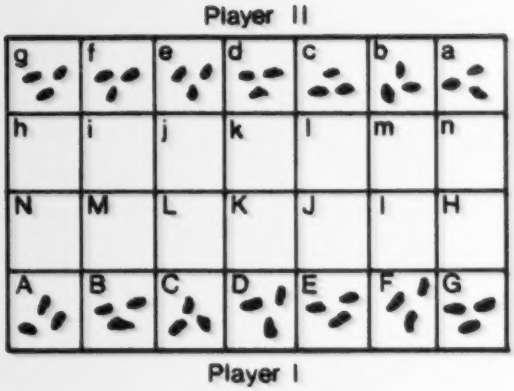


Fig. 1: Placement at the beginning of a game

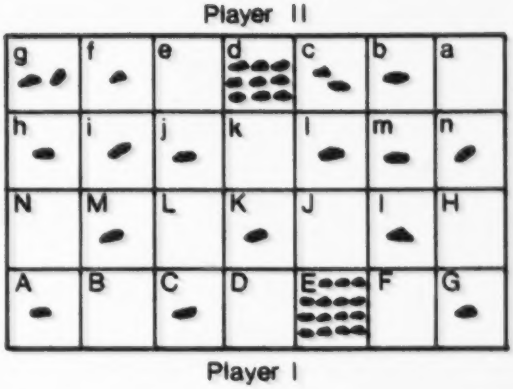


Fig. 2: Rearrangement at the beginning of a game

2. Rearranging the Counters (*Nsolo*)

Player II, the "Attacked" (*Mutukwa*), has the first chance, before the game begins, to rearrange her *nsolo* in either or both her rows in a more strategic grouping for capturing *nsolo* from Player I. Player I then, if she likes, rearranges her own counters. Figure 2 above shows one possible result of this rearrangement.

3. Moves

Each player begins from any hole or cup containing *nsolo* on her side, picking up all the seeds and distributing them one by one in consecutive cups counter-clockwise on her two rows.

A player's turn ends when the last seed (*lusolo*) in her hand falls into a hole <u>preceding</u> an empty hole. (Note this differs from Omweso rules where the player's turn ends when the last seed drops <u>in</u> an empty hole). Ending her play, the player "sleeps" ("*walala*") and the opponent takes a turn.

If, on the other hand, the player's last counter (*lusolo*) falls in a hole (empty or not) preceding a hole containing one or several *nsolo*, there are two possibilities: 1) capture *nsolo* from the opponent or 2) continue the play without capture.

4. Capturing or "Eating" *Nsolo*

If the last counter (*lusolo*) falls into a hole on the player's own <u>inner row</u> preceding a hole containing one or several *nsolo*, the player can capture or "eat" any *nsolo* from the cups that lie directly opposite on the opponent's inner row.

He or she can also capture or "eat" any *nsolo* contained in the cup opposite the opponent's back row, <u>provided</u> there are also *nsolo* in the

inner cup.

Following the capture, the *nsola* are taken from the opponent's side and put into play, beginning from the cup following his or her last deposit (i.e., opposite the now empty cups of the opponent).

5. Example of Capturing

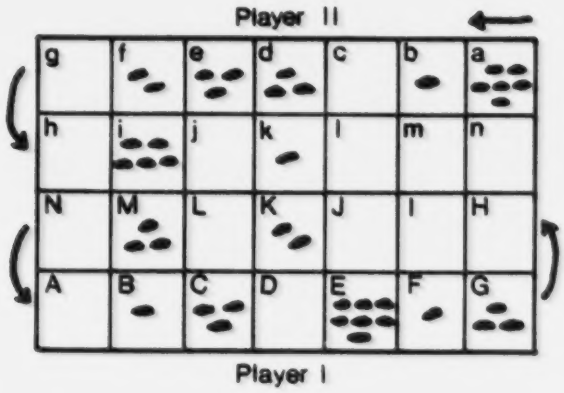


Fig. 1

Player I takes the 7 *nsolo* from E and drops them one by one into F, G, H, I, J, K, ending in L in Fig. 1 above. (If M, the next hole, had been empty, Player I would "sleep"--"walala"--or end his or her turn.)

Since M, on Player I's inner row, contains 3 *nsolo*, it is possible for Player I to capture *nsolo* from Player II's opposite cups. In this case, Player I finds that both i, on Player II's inner row, and f, on the back row, contain *nsolo*.

Thus, Player I can "eat" the 5 *nsolo* in i and the 2 *nsolo* in f. Taking the captured *nsolo*, he or she starts distributing them, one by one, in the cups on his or her side, beginning from M.

6. Continuing the Play Without Capture

If the player's last *lusolo* falls into a hole next to a hole containing other *nsolo* and there is no possibility of capturing from the opponent, the player picks up the seeds in the next cup and continues distributing them counter-clockwise (beginning with the next forward cup) as before.

7. Winning and Losing

The loser is the player whose *nsolo* have been "eaten" by the opponent or whose inner row (H-N or h-n) is completely empty.

PART III
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

MAKING THE BOARD GAMES

As previously mentioned, the playing pattern or board for any of the games described here can be marked out on the ground or on any flat surface available. However, permanent boards (which make nice gifts) can be made in a variety of ways, ranging from the simplest functional designs to much more elaborate versions or pieces of art. With the few suggestions and models given here as a guide, creative students can go on to design their own boards. They are restricted only by using 1) the appropriate pattern or shape for the playing area, and 2) African or African looking patterns for the decorative features of the board. While these games are interesting enough in themselves, they should always be associated with their origins and the people who play them.

Flat Boards

Flat boards are used for Shisima, Achi, Murabaraba, Seega, and Kei, all of which are explained in this manual (see Part II, pp. 11-22), as well as other games mentioned here and elsewhere (see Bibliography, pp. 51-52).

Equipment Needed

Any or all of the following may be used for making the flat boards:

- Paper upon which to draw or paint the design.
- Pencils, felt tip pens, magic markers, crayons, paints, a ruler, and T-square for drawing the design.
- Cardboard, plywood, or other heavy material upon which to mount the design.
- Scissors, glue, shellac, and/or laminating equipment for mounting the design.
- Bottle tops, flat beads, wooden cylinders, cardboard or similar materials from which 6 to 40 pieces of two different colors or shapes can be made for the counters.

Determining the Size of the Board

The size of the boards can vary, but they usually range from 8 1/2" x 11" to 14" x 19". The first step in making the board is to decide on the size of the playing area. The size of the playing area will depend in part on the shape of the design.

The Playing Pattern

Each game has a distinct design for the playing surface that must be drawn in the shape shown in the illustrations in Part II. For example, an octagonal shape for Shisima (p. 11), a square or sometimes a rectangular shape for Achi (p. 12), crossing lines for Murabaraba (p. 13), the 5-row

squares of Seega (p. 15), and a checker board for Kei (p. 17).

Making a Border for the Board

Adding a border around the playing area gives some opportunities for decoration. The decorations can include some African designs, the name of the game, its origin, and so forth. The size of the border is entirely up to the person who is making the board.

Drawing and Decorating the Board

Having selected the overall dimensions of the board (including the playing area and the border), the next step is to draw the design. The playing area and the border can be drawn on a paper which will serve as the face of the board. Depending on the age and grade level of the student, as well as the amount of time available, the designs can be rendered in simple black and white (even omitting the border, if necessary) or they can be colored with crayons or paints or in any other manner.

Mounting the Design

For a long lasting board, the design should be mounted (by gluing or pasting it on heavy cardboard or plywood) and then either covered with clear shellac, or better still, laminated. Another possibility is to bind the edges with tape.

Making the Counters

All of the games described here use two sets of playing pieces, each set of a different design. Two different shapes of cardboard, such as circles and triangles, could be cut out and painted with distinctive colors. For example, brown circles could be used for one set, white triangles for the other set. Other possibilities would be to use bottle tops, cylinders, beads, or beans and paint them different colors. It would also be interesting to differentiate the counters by using distinctive African designs, as those suggested for Shisima and Achi (pp. 38-40). Other African designs are given on p. 43 of this section.

Some Examples of Flat Board Designs

The examples of Shisima and Achi are meant to suggest the ways in which any of the flat boards might be designed. The important point to keep in mind is that boards should be as authentically African as possible.

1. Shisima

   The playing board of Shisima is identified with a particular group of people, the Tiriki in Kenya. The design shows the *shisima* (their word for "water source") in the center and the *imbalavali* (water insects) occupying the six corners. (See p. 11 in Part II for a close-up illustration.) Since the Tiriki live in Kenya, the border design also might incorporate the Kenyan flag (see the following page for an illustration of the Kenyan flag).

Fig. 1 is an illustration of the Kenyan flag. The top of the flag is black, the middle section is red, and the bottom is green. Each section is separated by narrow white bands. The figure in the center is a warrior's shield in red with black sides and white markings.

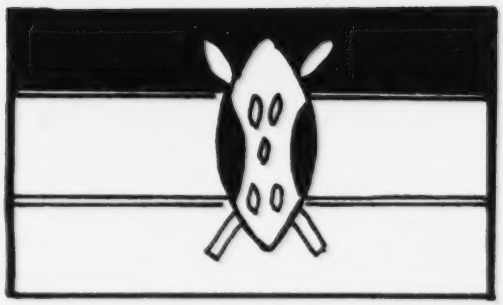


Fig. 1

The playing pieces (called *imbalavali*) could be marked with, or made to represent, different insect figures.

Thus, a finished Shisima board could look something like this, with the Kenyan flag on the border and the insects on the playing pieces:

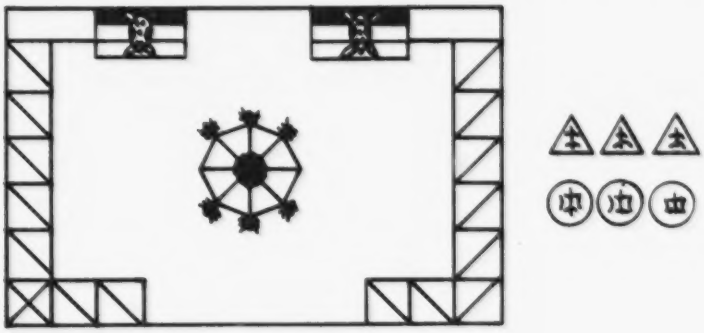


Fig. 2

2. Achi

The playing area for this game is not distinctive. It is similar to many other games of alignment, square or rectangular, with crossing lines or squares.

To identify it as a Ghanaian game, some symbols of the Akan people might be placed at some of the corners, as illustrated in Fig. 5 on the next page. Or, they might be included in the border design. Playing pieces, too, could be marked with some of the more abstract versions of the Akan (or Asante) Adinkra symbols.

Some of the Adinkra symbols are shown on the next page. The Adinkra symbols of the Akan or the Asante people may be found on stools, cloth, jewelry, and linguist staffs, as well as on games. Note the proverbs and/or sayings that are represented by the symbols.

Akan (or Asante) Adinkra Symbols

Fig. 1

THREE HEADS

"Tikoro nnko agyina."

"One head cannot go into counsel" or "Three heads are better than one."

SYMBOL OF WISDOM

"Mati masie."

"I have kept what I have heard."

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

SANKOFA (BIRD)

"You can always look back and correct your mistakes." (Learning from the past)

SYMBOL OF UNITY

"Akoma Ntowaso."

"The joined or united hearts."

Fig. 4

A completed Achi board might look like this, with the Adinkra symbols in the corners and on the playing pieces.

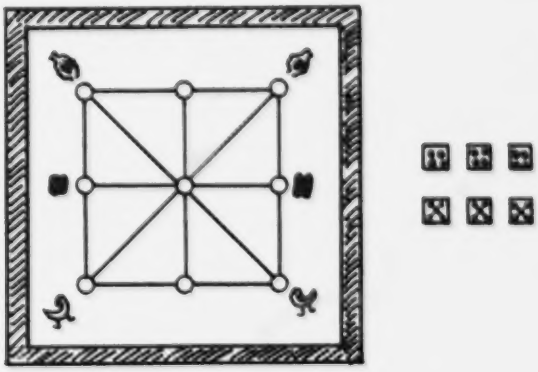


Fig. 5

Boards with Cups or Holes

Oware, Adi, Awele, Ayo, Okwe, Omweso, and Tshisolo, referred to generically as mankala and explained in Part II of this manuel (see pp. 23-35), are all played on boards with cups or holes. The two most common types of boards for the games are the two-row and the four-row boards. The illustrations below are examples of these two types.

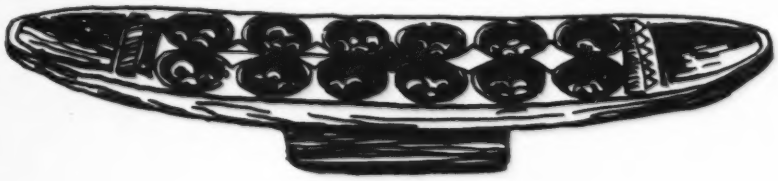


Fig. 1

The two-row board in Fig. 1 might be used for such mankala games as Oware, Adi, Awele, Ayo, Okwe, and J'odu.

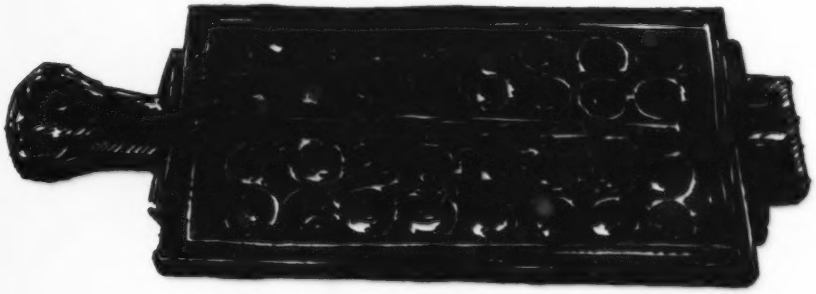


Fig. 2

The four-row board in Fig. 2 might be used for such mankala games as Omweso, Bao, Soro, Orusoro, and Coro. Four-row games such as Tshisolo, Lisolo, Tshiela, and Kisumi require fewer holes.

Ways of Making Two-Row Boards

The suggestions given here for making mankala playing boards will cover only the two-row boards that have six holes on each side. More ambitious students, however, can easily adapt these ideas for the four-row boards and/or boards with varying numbers of holes in the rows.

The three examples of how to construct the two-row boards provided here also may be expanded upon, depending on the age and creative abilities of the students.

1. Egg Carton Boards

Resources Needed:

- 12-inch two-row egg carton, six (preferably shallow) holes per side. A non-plastic egg carton is preferable because the slick or plastic ones will not take paint and thus are hard to decorate.

- Masking tape, scissors, paint (poster type), and glue.

- Paper cups or other types of small containers (about 2 inches in diameter).

- 48 seeds or beans (large red kidney beans or dried lima beans work well) for counters.

- Cardboard or wood, newspapers, and equipment for soaking the paper for the sturdier boards, which are built up with papier mache and mounted on a base.

Procedure:

Cut off the cover of the egg carton, set the bottom (with holes) into it, and tape or glue the two sections together so as to have a steady board. Cut or press down any high points between the cups so that the top will be level. (See Figs. 1 and 2 below.) Then paint or decorate with African designs (e.g., the Asante symbols shown on p. 40 or the designs illustrated on p. 43). A dish or any type of small container (e.g., a paper cup) can be attached or set at each end to hold the seeds or beans as they are captured (see Fig. 3 below).

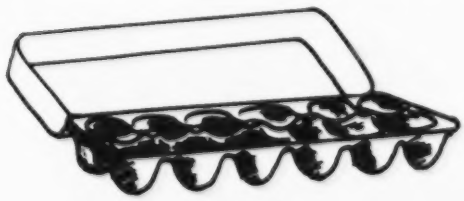


Fig. 1

Fig. 2

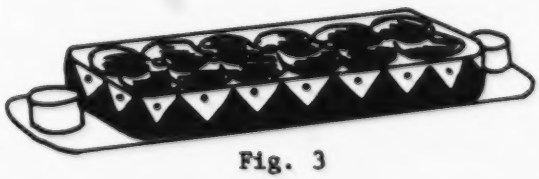
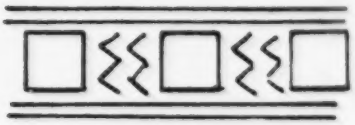


Fig. 3

A more durable board can be made using a cardboard or wooden base about 16 inches long, 3 inches wide, and 1/2 inch thick. Thumb tack or glue the cover to the egg carton in the center of the board. Cut down two paper cups to about 2 inches in height, and tack or glue the cups to the board on either end. Put the bottom half of the egg carton, with

the egg cups, inside the inverted cover on the base and tape together. Using papier-mache to line and smooth up the holes of the middle section, also add a thin layer of papier-mache to the sides and ends (see Fig. 2, p. 42, above). After it is dry, the board and base can be painted, shellacked, and/or decorated with African designs, such as the following.



Examples of African Designs

Fig. 1

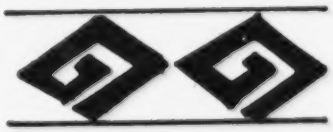


Fig. 2

2. Wooden Board

Resources Needed:

- Piece of soft wood, approximately 22" x 8" x 2".

- 48 seeds or beans.

- Woodworking equipment, sandpaper, and polish.

Procedure:

Mark six circles on each side of the board, and one in the center at each end. Circles should be about 2 1/2" in diameter. Carve and hollow out the circles, making them about 1 1/2" deep. Sandpaper and polish the board. For a more elaborate board, add a carved base, legs, figures, and/or other African designs (see Figs. 1 and 2, p. 8, in the Background Information section).

3. Travel Boards

A wooden board, made of two pieces which are hinged together in the middle (see Fig. 3 below) can be made to fold up. With the playing seeds inside in the cups, and the lid closed with a hook, this can be carried around, even on trips!

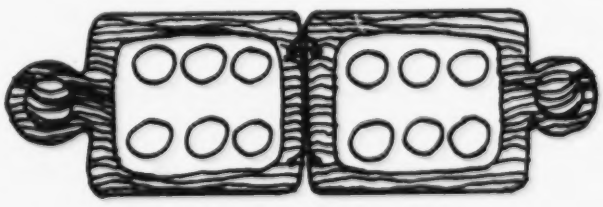


Fig. 3

Decorations for Playing Boards

The addition of some African designs is an important step in making any of the playing boards. Students should consider the sample patterns provided on pp. 39-40 and p. 43. They also should study the board illustrations provided on p. 8 in the Background to African Games section and p. 41 of this section.

Students also should be encouraged to investigate other sources. For instance, they might visit an African art exhibition or a museum that contains African art. Or, they might refer to African art books (see the Bibliography) for ideas about designs and colors, as well as information on the origin of the designs. The game in Fig. 2 in the Background to African Games section, for example, is shaped like an Asante stool, the symbol of political authority.

SUGGESTIONS FOR OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. To encourage intergenerational sharing, have older students make the games and teach them to younger students.
2. Have students plan a tournament or festival with games, featuring any one or several of the games suggested in this manual. For the African background, have students add art work, decorations with African objects (especially on the game boards), maps, and other creations, including writings about the games. Play or perform some African music, serve some African food, and/or invite African guests to conduct a welcoming ceremony.
3. Have students compare names, playing boards, rules, and customs of the African games with games of similar types in the United States and other parts of the world. Refer to "Mankala Games: Where They Are Found and What They Are Called," pp. 47-48 of this section. This could be an in-depth study, especially for older students, which could culminate in an international exhibit of games.
4. Have students do an in-depth study of the Adinkra symbols discussed on pp. 39-40 of this section. Adinkra charts are available at the African Studies Program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Also see Bibliography.
5. Some of the games might be used in connection with a science class. Shisima, for instance, might be used to encourage students to explore African insects. For further information on the African environment, contact the African Studies Program at the University of Illinois.
6. In designing the playing boards, students could also do a study of national flags and their symbolism. Fact sheets and information on individual countries can be acquired from the African Studies Program at the University of Illinois.
7. While the games are interesting enough in themselves, they also can be used to help students gain a better appreciation of the African people who play them. We have provided some information on several groups who play these games (see pp. 45-46), but students also could be assigned research projects on particular African ethnic groups.

THE ASANTE PEOPLE OF GHANA
(Players of Oware)

The game of Oware is associated especially with the Asante people, one of the historically and culturally dominant groups of the Akan people. The Akan, who make up approximately half the population (about 6 million) of the country of Ghana, also are spread into the eastern part of Ivory Coast. All the Akan people, who come from traditional political units, share similar cultures and languages. The most widely spoken language is Twi.

Most Akans have traditionally been farmers. In the early days Kumasi, the Asante capital, was a trading center, especially for kola nuts and gold. (Before independence in 1957, Ghana was called the Gold Coast.) Some of the bronze weights used to weigh gold dust were made in the shape of Oware boards. In recent years, cocoa, produced largely in the Akan areas of southern and central Ghana, has been the main export of Ghana.

The Asante kingdom, at its height in the 19th century, is especially remembered for its resistance against British imperialism. A favorite story is about the time the Asante allowed the British to "capture" their famous Gold Stool, the symbol of authority said to have come to the Asante from heaven. The British soon discovered they had only a copy; the real stool was safely hidden. Though now under the Ghanaian government, the Asante kingdom and the Golden Stool remain at the Asante capital, Kumasi, and many of the old traditions continue. Stools, made in different designs, are still important. The crowning of a new chief, with his or her special stool, is called "enstooling." Oware boards are sometimes made in the shape of stools (see, e.g., Fig. 2 on p. 8).

Oware is a game that is played everywhere. In the villages, it is played late in the day after the men have returned from the cocoa farms or from clearing fields for planting. In the cities, like Kumasi or Accra, it is played outside under a palm tree in the family compounds or in an apartment enclosure. While there are only two players (often men), there are generally many spectators who never hesitate to give advice on the moves. Speed of play is mandatory. A slow player or one who makes a bad move can expect chiding from the audience--laughter and/or sarcastic remarks. Children might join the spectators, but they can be chased away if they get too noisy. They are more likely to go off and dig their own Oware holes in the sand.

THE BAGANDA PEOPLE OF UGANDA
(Players of Omweso)

The game of Omweso originated in Uganda with the Baganda people, for whom the country is named. The Baganda, the most numerous group in Uganda (about 16% of the total population), have been predominantly agricultural people. They produce coffee and cotton, the country's main sources of revenue, and they do some herding.

The game has been closely associated with the old Buganda kingdom, where picking seeds for the game was part of the accession rites for the about-to-be-installed ruler called the Kabaka. The game was very much a part of court life and elsewhere in the country where there were admini-

strative chiefs and clan elders. It provided the rulers with opportunities to meet their subjects socially and keep in touch with events.

During the colonial occupation by the British, the kingdoms lost their power. When Uganda became independent in 1962, the Kabaka (Mutesa II) was installed as president and Milton Obote was made prime minister. Soon, however, Obote abolished all the kingdoms and the Kabaka went into exile.

The decline of the Buganda kingdom, westernization of education, and the movement of Africans to towns and suburbs changed social conditions considerably, causing a temporary decline of Omweso. However, as people adjusted to city life and regular transportation was established, gatherings were made easier and the game of Omweso revived, becoming a pastime of the cities as well as the villages. In the capital city of Kampala, it became very popular, and was played in the marketplaces and large business meeting places during lunch hours and in the late afternoon. Apart from the Baganda people, eighteen other language groups in Uganda play it under the same or different names (e.g., Ehyeso, Ekyeso, Ekyesho, Ekishoro, Soro, and Coro). Recent events in Uganda have again disrupted much of the social life, but there is no doubt that Omweso will continue to be an important part of Uganda's cultural life.

THE BALUBA PEOPLE OF ZAIRE
(Players of Tshisolo)

Tshisolo, the Luba word for "chicken," is played by the Baluba people of Zaire. The Baluba people are descended from one of the most important states in Central Africa: the Luba Empire, founded around 1500 by a man named Kongolo. Culturally and politically related to other groups in the area (especially the Lunda), the Baluba spread their influence from the Kwango River in the west to Lake Tanganyika in the east. Though some are scattered through urban areas in other parts of Zaire, most of the Baluba today live in the Kasai and Shaba provinces. In language and culture, they have much in common with their neighbors in Zambia and Angola.

Traditionally drawing their living from agriculture, many Baluba today make their living from the land another way--through mining. Over 80% of Zaire's minerals, the country's chief export, comes from Shaba and Kasai. Diamond mines are located at Mbuji Mai in Kasai, and the copper industry is based in Lubumbashi and neighboring towns in Shaba.

Some of the masterpieces of African art, including works of Baluba, have come from this mining area of Africa. Among these are very beautiful boards for playing games like Tshisolo. In early 1900, some playing cups unearthed from a prehistoric dig in Zaire implied the game was played under the name Mangura with counters called "*kisolo*."

The company towns set up by the mining and other industries have changed social and community life drastically for many Baluba. Yet Tshisolo and other versions of the game (e.g., a children's version called Ngulungu, which means "antelope") are still a part of both town and village life. Tshisolo and games like it are also played by related peoples in Zaire, Angola, and Zambia. The Bemba people in Zambia, for example, play Tshisolo (also spelled Chicole and Lisolo).

MANKALA GAMES: WHERE THEY ARE FOUND AND WHAT THEY ARE CALLED
(A Partial Listing)

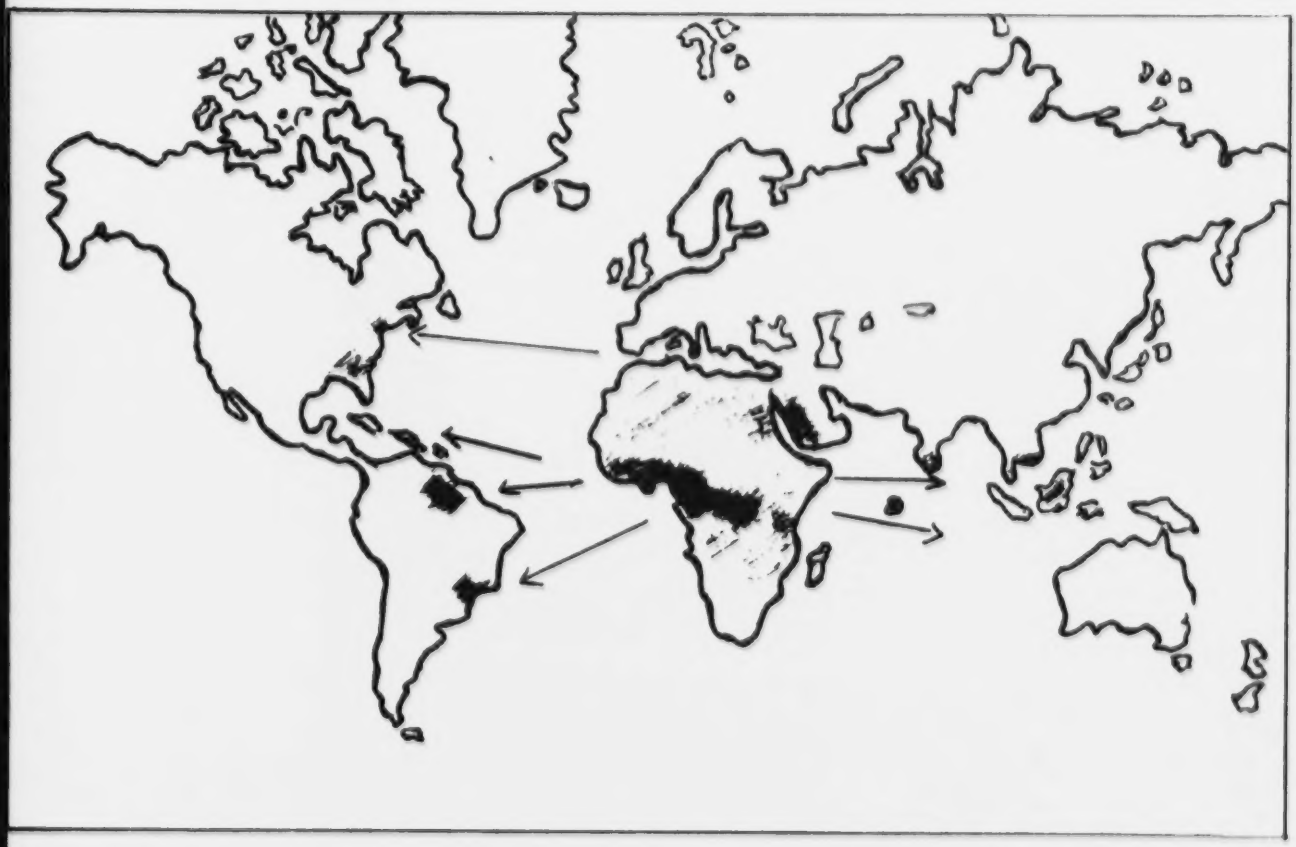
AFRICA

Country	Language/ Ethnic Group	NAME Two-Row Game	NAME Four-Row Game
Angola	Tshokwe		Chela, Tshiela
	...		Mbau, Soro
Benin	...	Aji, Adi, Adito	
	...	Madji, Wouri	
Cameroon	Fang	Kal	
Egypt	...	Mankalah, Macala	
Ethiopia	...	Mancal, Gabata	
Gabon	Fan, Epongwe	Kale	
	...	Songo	
Gambia	...	Wari, Woro	
Ghana	Asante	Oware, Wari	
	Ewe	Adi	
Guinea	...	Wari, Wuri, Woli	
Ivory Coast	Baoule	Awele	
	...	Aware, Wari, Wouri	
	...	Kpo	
Kenya	Kikuyu	Giuthi	
	Luo	Ajwa	
	Maasai	Enkeshui	
	Samburu	Ntotoi	
	Swahili		Kombe, Bao Lakete
	Turkana		N'giles, M'bo
Liberia	...	Kpo, Wori	
Malawi	Nyanja		Msuwa
	...		Nchuwa, Nsoli
Mali	Dogon	Ī, Ē, Walu, Koro	
Mozambique	...		Tshuba, Shimuna
Namibia	Damara, Herero,)		Huts, Hus
	Khoi-Khoin)		

Country	Language/ Ethnic Group	N A M E Two-Row Game	Four-Row Game
Nigeria	Hausa	Dara	
	Igbo	Okwe, Azigo	
	Yoruba	Ayo	
Senegal	...	Wori, Wuri	
	...	Walu, Walya	
Sierra Leone	Mende	Wari, Warre, Ti	
Sudan	...	Magala, Wari	
Tanzania	Swahili		Bao, Mbao,
	Arabic		Bao Kiarabu
Togo	...	Wouri	
Uganda	Luganda, Lusoga		Omweso
	Lunyole		Ehyeso
	Lugwere		Ekyeso
	Runyankore		Ekyesho
	Acholi, Lango		Coro
	Alur, Lugbara,)		Soro
	Madi, Kakwa)		
	Runyoro/Rutoro		Orusoro
	Jopadhola		Weri
	Karimojong		Ngikilees
Zaire	Luba		Tshisolo, Ngulungu
	Tshokwe, Lunda		Tshiela
	Mongo		Mangola, Mongola
			Bokebe
Zambia	Bemba		Chisolo, Lisolo
Zimbabwe	...		Isafu

OUTSIDE AFRICA

Country	Game Name(s)	Country	Game Name(s)
Bali	Mechiwa	Iraq	Mancala
Brazil	Adi	Java	Dakon
Guyana	Aji	Philippines	Chuncajohn
Haiti	Wari, Kay	Syria	Mankala, Makala, Suba, Chuba
India	Kuta boia, Pachgarhwa, Pallankuli	Turkey	Mancala
Iran	Mancala	USA	Chuba, Kalah, Oh-Wah-Ree, Pitfall



THE SPREAD OF MANKALA GAMES
(Darker shading indicates concentration of Mankala games)

AFRICA: COUNTRIES AND CAPITALS

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African Board Games and Numbering Systems

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Symbols of Adinkra Cloth (chart) by Kwaku Ofori-Ansah. Available $2.50 (prepaid) from Kwaku Ofori-Ansah, 6711 Northwest Drive #H-2, Hyattsville, Maryland 20782.

United Nations Flag Chart, Order No. 80.I.4 $2.00 (prepaid) from UN Sales Section Direct Mail, Room A-3315, New York, New York 10017.

Game Manufacturers and Publishers

Creative Publications, P.O. Box 10328, Palo Alto, California 94304 (mankala and others).

Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7D2, England (game posters; specializes in educational materials for young people on third world countries).

World Wide Games, Inc., Delaware, Ohio 43105 (Shisima, Adi, and others).

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